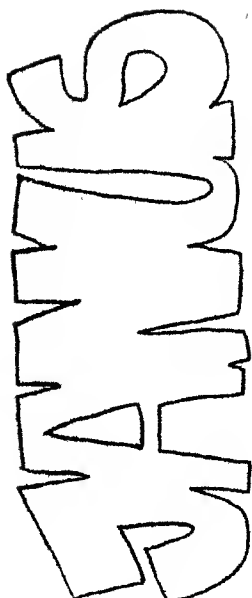




# James

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SF as Genre

As editor, I have suddenly found a need to pass along a lot of gossip that has been accumulating, both with regard to the 'zine and the Madcity sf community, to the readers of "JANUS".

First, my apologies for the fact that there is again not enough space or time for the article on Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover books. Somehow, it got lost in the shuffle of publishing deadlines once again. I promise, on the body of my dear departed, now non-corporate, super-organized, intellectual, alter-ego (Now vacationing somewhere in the upper paleolithic) that the next issue of "JANUS" will not appear without it.

We were quite gratified (in most cases) with the increase in the response to "JANUS" as represented in our much expanded letter section.

The letter from Mr. Ellison was thrilling, to say the least. The enthusiasm evident in his praise was all the more pleasing to Jeanne and I for its being totally unexpected. The letter Mr. Warner provided us with was very encouraging and informative also. I cannot agree with him, however, that the usual treatment female characters receive in sf is excusable because male characters are sometimes treated in a bad light also. How often, if ever, do female characters even receive equal billing? They are there to be 'beautiful but not too bright' or active and independent enough to get into dangerous situations but not to get out of them. Unless they receive the help of some omnipotent (and usually potent also) male character. Inefficient, but charming; Adventurous, but rather silly and impractical; These are the roles all too often assigned to women in sf. They may even be so described when their actions would be considered heroic in a man. It is this general picture of the supposed ineptitude of womankind to which I object in sf.

Rumors about a Madcon appear to have been exaggerated. I do hear tell of plans for a one day Mad-Micro-Con, but who can tell what basis these rumors have in reality? One must always be suspicious of street-talk one picks up in Madcity. There could be many and mysterious motives behind the creation of such rumors. Nevertheless, I shall report the full contents of them to you. It is said that there may be a one-day extravaganza complete with female sf writer, panels on women in sf, movies, lectures on writing technique. It sounds like something no one would want to say they'd missed, if indeed it occurs.

Jeanne and I continue to disagree on the status of sf as a genre. Since I still seem to have these problems of time (or lack thereof) and space, she has consented to present her argument in more detail for this issue. (I knew there'd be a way for me to postpone an answer...) My response will appear in the next "JANUS". And while I'm on the subject, Jeanne plans an article for next time relating some evidence for the theory that society evolved from female rather, than male, dominated tribes to the often horrendous sf which projects 'natural' male dominance into past and future cultures. So, with great hopes for the next "JANUS" and great pride (plus not a little relief) in the completion of this one, I leave you to Jeanne's discussion of the undefinability of sf as a genre.



# TO DEFINE SF -- IMPOSSIBLE?

BY JEANNE GOMOLL

I happen to think that sf is not definable as a genre unto itself.

I said so in the last issue of JANUS, and we received some rebuttals by mail, but the strongest arguments by far have come to me from Jan, editor-in-chief of our publication. Thus you may expect a future editorial or two from her, which she promises. she will valiantly present her views in answer to the last and this piece.

One argument that came up during some of our debates related, naturally enough, to the reason I am so hot to de-classify the stuff. Why not leave it alone and let everybody keep defining sf in the way they want to or in the direction they are pointing at? The term is serviceable at least in that everyone thinks that there is something solid out there underneath all those fuzzy edges...

To a point, I agree: As long as everyone thinks there are such definite and solid things as sf and sf writers, and as long as people are self-consciously writing sf - the term is indeed useful.

So why should I get all hot under the collar about a useful term that some people with delusions of grandeur have used to identify a tradition reaching from as far back as ancient Greek literature to a future of magnificent literary and social importance? I'm not trying to be a spoil-sport, really, but I do see a few problems precipitated by the notion that sf is a genre unto itself. You see, it's the phrase, "unto itself" that bothers me. It has allowed all sorts of critical rules that are applied ONLY to sf and not to mainstream\* ...or vise-versa, and has prevented certain critical rules of mainstream from being applied (or listened to) in sf. Thus, no mainstream critic is competent to judge sf because that person would obviously not have the technical-scientific background necessary to do justice. Furthermore, due to the crucial, supposed differences of sf vs mainstream, we have all seen sf excused for its lack in areas such as character development and style.

No: when a work of literature is written and presented for critical judgement, it

\* A term which seems almost as ridiculous as "non-catholic" or any other ethnocentric grandfallon to describe EVERYBODY ELSE, as if they were some united, self-contained group...which, I suppose is one way to perpetuate the myth that YOU belong to some united, self contained group...

must be judged as piece of ~~writing and art~~. Certainly, when that piece of literature includes an expertise of one variety or another (historical, medical, philosophical, ~~or scientific~~); a criticism ~~can be~~ more valid and enlightening if it shows some knowledge of that expertise. (A critic of Thomas Pynchon, for instance, would understand more levels of GRAVITY'S RAINBOW if he had some experience with theoretical physics. A whaling captain would find some interesting insights in Melville's MOBY DICK.) However, a critic with a minimum knowledge of that expertise could possibly come up with an equally valid analysis, even if (s)he should miss certain levels of appreciation. Just as a person coming from an sf tradition feels free to invade any piece of non-sf writing, insofar as they might bring an added insight to a work previously interpreted in a narrow manner (or totally "mainstream" approach), so too should the sf field welcome interpretations and criticism from as many varied points of view as possible.

My point is that, in regard to critical rules and the creations of avowed sf writers, it is only fair to add critical standards to be applied to a work of art (to accomodate the levels ~~added~~ by an expertise), never to subtract. I believe it to be highly unethical to claim by decree that such and such a body of works is ordained a genre unto itself and thus - not subject to the same critical standards as another body of works. We harm both the quality of sf writing by not pursuing high standards of excellence, and the quality of all literature by creating a fictional boundary between sf and mainstream, and by decreasing the chances for the connections and inter-pollination that make a growing literature so vital.

That is why I dislike the attempt to pin the badge of "genre" onto this term, sf.  
- Because that's all it is: a term.

--Or a point of view, perhaps, but not a genre. For a genre implies that at some point we can say that this body of works is sf and that body of works is not sf. To say "genre" also implies that there are certain characteristics common to each body of works that are not ~~common~~ to the other body of works. Now admittedly those characteristics might be expected to overlap a little bit, but not so much that we couldn't come up with a list of primary identifying traits for each "genre."

And that's the problem: there are no such defining characteristics! Mr. Glicksohn suggests in his letter to JANUS (published in the following section of this issue) that sf is what he enjoys to read. Now according to the old well-worn definition (sf being what you point at when you say the word), this is a perfectly reasonable definition, but it's not exactly universally applicable. We can't all carry Mr. Glicksohn's telephone number around with us and call him up whenever we are stumped as to what to call a given story... (and, who knows, Mr. Glicksohn might even die, heaven forbid, and then where would we all be?). Would we all attempt to use his definition at our own discretion (following his untimely death, of course), every enjoyable piece of literature would end up being labeled sf, and the term would no doubt degenerate ~~into~~ an innocuous synonym for "nice."

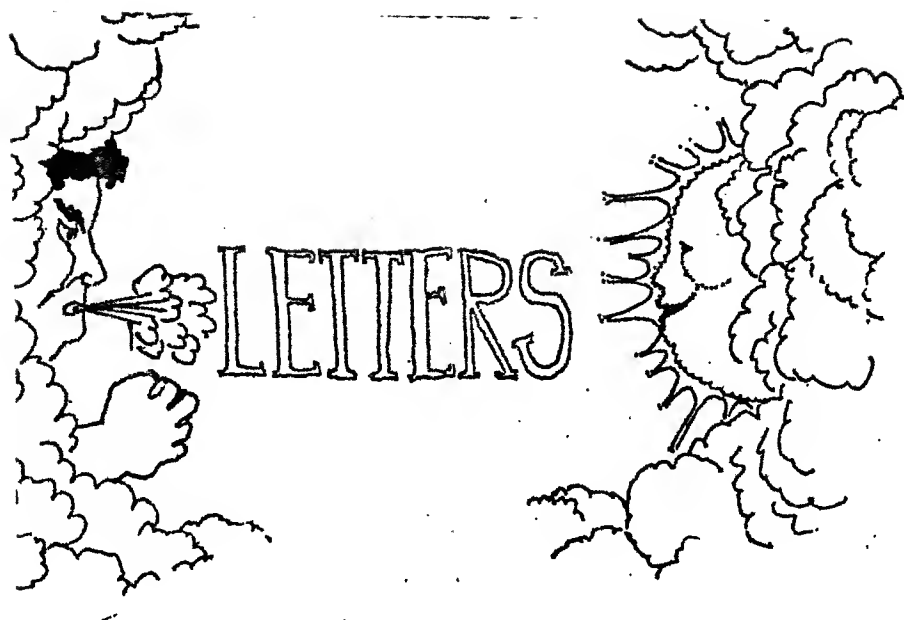
Other suggested defining characteristics, though perhaps a little more ~~thoroughly~~ thought out, are just as slippery.

One cannot say that they are works of fiction with a knowledge of science forming an integral part of their plots. The tendency to say "sf" or "speculative fiction" in place of "science fiction," indicates part of the dilemma here. And what would be done with authors like Thomas Pynchon and an enormous number of other modern "mainstream" authors who ~~are fully cognizant~~ of and careful to include the part technology and science play in our daily lives as part of their creations. It becomes an exercise in absurdity to distinguish between the two by degree of scientific understanding...

The element of speculation or extrapolation into the future has never really held as a defining characteristic either. The future isn't a necessary part of sf; neither is the factor of an "other" time or dimension. There are an impressive number of such stories written by authors who do not consider themselves as sf authors. Take Allen Drury, for example, - the innane pusher of conservative politics through best seller lists... Or, better, take Jorge Borges for your example...

But perhaps you'd define him as a fantasy writer, and then we'd have an even more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



#### LETTER FROM HARRY WARNER, JR.

Dear Janice: Many thanks for sending the first two issues of JANUS. At first glance, I thought the heavy concentration of fiction would make reading a tedious job. But as usual, I was wrong, going right through both issues in one sitting, or as close to one sitting as the telephone permitted. Main general reaction: happiness at finding lots of comparatively unfamiliar names among the contributors. Fanzines need more contributors badly and it's always nice to think that some of the people represented in these two issues will be contributing to lots of fanzines soon.

In the first issue, most of the fiction suffered from its length or lack thereof. After all, in more than a half-century of prozines, there has been only one pro author capable of writing the extremely short story excellently time after time, Fredric Brown. It's the hardest of all story lengths to master and it's the length most often found in fanzine fiction. The longest story in this issue, "Isn't Science Wonderful," seemed to be the best from the standpoint of story-telling. But the ending seemed inevitable by the bottom of the second page. Maybe it would have been a stronger story if this same ending were turned into a surprise, by causing the heroine to behave unduly fond of her husband and overly happy in her home life until she realized suddenly that it was her great opportunity to end her hypocrisy and get rid of her burden simultaneously.

In the second issue, I enjoyed in particular Jeanne Gomoll's article on the city in science fiction. It left me wanting more of the same, in the form of more sections which would deal with the alien-type city, the kinds of city that bems have built and inhabited in science fiction. It's a shame that Jeanne didn't devote a little more time to the conversion job of her school paper to fanzine article, because I suspect that the footnotes and some of the style characteristics which are sacred to school papers will prevent the good contents from getting the praise they deserve from Janus' readers. The data in the footnotes could have been worked into the text at the proper places, for instance, and some of the big words could have been replaced with shorter ones for easier reading.



The extended review of both the movie and story version of A Boy and His Dog is the best I've seen in any fanzine on the Ellison tale. I doubt if the movie will ever play in Hagerstown and I missed it at DisCon, so I can't provide any reactions to it, but the story seems to be treated quite accurately and fairly here. As for The Stepford Wives, I wish some fanzine writer or other would write to Ira Levin and ask if he had any secret meaning for the theme he chose. I can think of other interpretations which Jan Bogstad doesn't mention. Maybe the Stepford Husbands adopted this method of expressing their great love for their wives because they couldn't bear to think of them changing through the effects of aging. Or maybe the Stepford Wives were in such a rut that replacing them with automata wouldn't really have made any difference to the husbands; after all, the heroine in the book has trouble noticing the difference for a while.

As for your editorial, I don't think science fiction authors have been any more unflattering to women than to men in their story characters. Just suppose that celebrated characters like the Frankenstein monster, Killer Kane, Flash Gordon, Ted Sturgeon's It, Dick Seaton, and a hundred others had been females with exactly the same characteristics and behavior in other respects. Wouldn't you be even angrier to see women depicted in science fiction with such simple-minded evil or impulsiveness or stupidity?

One thing made me very happy: the opinions expressed about the stories included in the Asimov anthology. It's nice to know that a young person today can find the same pleasure in some of these stories that I found when I read them as an extremely young person as they originally appeared in the prozines. Born of the Sun was one that scored a particular bullseye on my imagination. I read it over and over, and every re-reading made the basic idea seem more logical and frightening. Another story mentioned here, The Human Pets of Mars, has the distinction of being by the first real, live pro I ever met face to face, Leslie F. Stone, who happened to move to Hagerstown just at the time I was getting active in fandom. (She had previously created a major sensation in fandom by turning out to be a woman; for some reason, everyone assumed that the possessor of that ambiguous given name was male.)

I'm not sure quite what to make of The Kaboodlian Chronicles. But I suspect that this is a roman à clef, whose meaning becomes evident in all its clarity only after the reader has become personally acquainted with Madison fandom. The Luttrells are the only ones up there whom I've met, although I think I still have a former cousin-in-law teaching journalism at the university. So I'll have to reserve final judgment, pleading lack of sufficient background to permit a reasoned verdict.

In all, they're quite good fanzines, not the least of whose virtues is clear mimeographing on paper that is neither white enough to cause blinding reflections nor dark enough to damage contrast. Some of the art is quite good, particularly the cover on the second issue and the illustration which served on the editorial page of both issues. I hope you people can keep Janus appearing at least until you've had three worldcons in Madison.

#### LETTER FROM MARK SHARPE

Dear Janice and Jeanne,

Hey, thanks for JANUS, it was the only bright spot today. The apartment complex I was to move into today had a fire next to my building and I didn't get to (or really want to) move in. I was also turned down for a job (as a cook) for another guy who had less experience than I but who impressed the manager with his dress - a liesure suit costing at least \$100. I, being poor, came in blue pants, a maroon shirt and a cardigan sweater. Now why would my dress have anything to do with whether or not I got the job? Well, on



the application it had a section for appearance and the interviewer wasn't all that fond of my attire and really liked the other guy's suit. I may be sick. This was supposed to be a LoC, wasn't it? I shall try to keep on the track from now on, though I promise nothing.

Is Sf Dead? Yes and no. No because there are excellent writers today turning out excellent fiction; LeGuin (my favorite) and Niven are two prime examples. Yes because there are people like Roger Elwood turning out the worst sort of drek possible and flooding the market with it. We also have Heinlein who should have stopped writing years ago, at least before TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE and I WILL FEAR NO EVIL were published. Then there is Delany and ~~POPP/IN/~~ DHALGREN. (I think Dogurine is a much better title; after all, that is where my Lasa Apsa squatted so tastefully. Unfortunately, Shang acted too late; I had already read the whole damn thing.) I, like Ms. Gomoll, had managed to work SF into term papers. My paper for "American Cinema" was the best example, but 2 SF films were used for the course (2001: A Space Oddysessy-oops! and Slaughterhouse 5). By the way, Donn Brazier published the article/paper in Title #47, it has also been sold professionally (YEA!) in a new SF promag coming out of the depths of Indianapolis. The only reason he paid me is because I have been helping him with it, but from what I've seen of his material so far...well it isn't too good. Send Help all you writers! The address is Dennie White/1420 S. Lindley/Indianapolis, IN/46241. Oops! Off the track again. "City as Idea" was very well thought out and executed AND long. I hate to see how much research went into the article though Jeanne may have been able to write most of it from memory as I did with "Catching up with Tomorrow: Future Shock and the Contemporary Science Fiction Film" in Title. Maybe a days worth of research went into it, digging through old notes for reviews and rummaging through old zines. "The Kaboodlian Chronicles" was a bit strange which might explain why I liked it. However, there was a bit too much white (or tan as the case might be)space. I will not even comment on the UFO piece as I hate UFO anythings...

...The reviews were good and I had read all of the books mentioned except Flyer which on your recommendation I shall steer clear of. I wouldn't walk accross the street to see "A Boy and His Dog" so obviously I refuse to comment. On the other hand, I did see "The Stepford Wives" and wish I had not. I am a member of, surprise, the National Organization of Women (joined after attending an excellent lecture - though I hate that term - by Gloria Steinhem last September at IU). I also belong to the American Civil Liberties Union. Can you imagine what my reaction was to that shit? I am not kidding when I say I cried out in amazment at some of the things in that film such as the scene where Whats-her-name is confronted by her double and merely screams. Perhaps I've been warped by my sister, the army MP, but I couldn't imagine any woman screaming when her life was obviously threatened. My sister was attacked in Washington (DC) by a rapist with a knife. She was stationed there at the time and had already gone through training at MP school. The turkey who attacked her was in the hospital for almost a month after she got done with him. Side note - they let him off with a suspended sentence even though he attacked her and threatened her with a deadly weapon. Makes a person wonder at our judicial system. It also makes me mad!

Again, thanks for the JANUS; I hope I get more (hinthinthinthinthint)...

LETTER FROM GAIL KIMBERLY

Dear Editors:

Thanks very much for sending me a copy of JANUS, No. 2. I found it interesting, and especially, of course, Thomas Murn's review of FLYER. Sorry you didn't like it, Thomas, but de gustibus non est disputandum, and I'd be the last to disputand.

I'm boggled, though, as to how you knew about the slimy mire I come from. I thought it bad enough the neighbors knew the condition of my front yard, but to have it bruited about Madison, Wisc. is most embarrassing!

Anyway, I hope you all noticed that Mist didn't scream once, all through the book,



nor break down, nor get anyone else into trouble. Couldn't that be considered a step in the right direction?

Congratulations and good luck to all of you on your new zine.

[ED. (J.B.) -- Ms. Kimberly is to be congratulated on the skillful wordplay she indulged in in her reply to Tom Murn's article. I can't get a hold of a copy of FLYER or I'd be tempted to read it looking for more of the same. Yes, Ms Kimberly, it is definitely a step in the right direction if Mist is all that you say, at least as far as I'm concerned. Tom's opinion we already know.]

#### LETTER FROM MIKE GLICKSOHN

Dear Janice & Jeanne,

When JANUS arrived this afternoon and I gave it the cursory flip through that every newly-arrived fanzine gets around here my initial thought was "Good grief, this is a bargain basement STARLING!" Now that I've actually started to read the issue this resemblance is at least partially explained by the fact that you are Madison Fandom and Hank is your printer and so the STARLING typeface and the STARLING paper and the STARLING layout (including the unnecessary ca m'est egal manner in which the articles jump from one end of the fanzine to the other) are explained. I hope you know what you're getting into! I doubt Hank has explained to you what happened to legendary Columbia Fandom after he exhorted them into frenetic activity. It might well behoove you to know of the historical precedents before you become too deeply involved with this highly suspicious character!

I hope that you won't put it down to male chauvinist piggery if I react to your editorials with a suppressed "Ho-Hum." I hope/trust/expect that both of the Lutrells will have mentioned to you that the twin topics of a definition of sf and the role of women in science fiction have received rather a large amount of paper time over the last few years. This in no way says that they are not topics worthy of discussion and that new minds approaching them won't find them exciting and meaningful but it's a little hard to reply to the fifteenth attempt to evaluate the role of science fiction in the development of modern literature and the twentieth totally irrelevant and completely reasonable dissertation on the complete lack of social consciousness and awareness in the Gor schlock novels of John Norman.

For me, a well-known Philistine, sf exists as a separate genre because it consistently publishes the books I find the most entertaining and enjoyable to read. (When I'm not too busy reading fanzines discussing the fiction I no longer have time to look at, that is!) I don't look for more than that from sf (although I'm not going to reject it if I find more) and I find that far too many of the academically oriented writers who dissect sf lose sight of the, to me, prime purpose of most sf (and current fiction of any category), entertainment. Perhaps I'm rare among fans, but I seldom if ever proselytize for sf. I make no extravagant claims for the superiority of my favorite fiction over the rest of modern literature, and I don't try to justify my love of the genre by imbuing it with virtues it may or may not have. I like sf; I enjoy reading it; and I need no better justification than that to continue doing so.

As for the role of women in sf, well recently there have been several fanzines devoted to what might be called the feminist view of science fiction. While I can't say I'm super interested in the topic, I readily agree that it's one that is not only worth serious investigation but also needs such study, but I've never been able to rationalize those thoughts with articles pointing out the chauvinism in the Gor books. These are such blatant examples of deliberate chauvinism that I'm amazed any feminist could consider them worthy of serious rebuttal. It's always seemed to me that the underlying, and in many cases unconscious, male chauvinism that has been a part of a lot of sf is a target far more worthy of illumination. No?

I can't say as I see the rational behind the McLuhanesque construction of this issue

but such is the insidious influence of the Machiavellian Master Of Madison. Hank <sup>9</sup> seems incapable of producing a fanzine that doesn't jump around like a warty toad on speed and his idiosyncrasies have infected this fanzine too. Too bad, but SoItGoes.

Not being a sercon fan I've nothing to say about all the heavy raps in this issue but that's my own completely subjective evaluations: chacun a son gout, as we wickedly bilingual foreigners are wont to say.

The start of the Kaboodlian Chronicles is enough to pica the interest of any science fiction fan. I couldn't help noticing the influence of the calculus on this piece, since it was somewhat derivative. And the first few paragraphs clearly show what happens when a fan writer works for peanuts!

It strikes me, admittedly belatedly but such is the way my alcohol inhibited synapses work, that I did have a thought or two about sf and the Past as Future school of extrapolation. The number of sf writers who have adapted either ancient or current societies and propelled them a millenium or ten into the future is practically legion, ranging from Asimov and the Roman Empire through to Pournelle and the Royal Navy, not to mention Zelazny and his various pantheons, and touching as large a variety of bases as Anderson's feudalism and Star Trek's (horrors!) fascist/prohibition/Athenian parallel developments. Despite the imaginative nature of the science fiction novel, the number of writers who've dared attempt a really original or inventive society is surprisingly small and, I think, for understandable reasons. It's so much easier to adapt than invent. Occasionally a writer can take the projection of a past society into the future and consciously and deliberately make its adaptation successful. Anderson is a prime example: in his serious fantasy, THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS stands out, and in his delightfully humorous peregrinations who could possibly quibble with the Hoka stories and their faithful duplication of various earthly milieu? Handled well I find no fault with this particular technique.

So it goes. And so do I.

Good luck . . . but trust not the evial Hank!

[John Bartelt -- Just as the esteemed Mr. Glicksohn considers the Gor novels such "blatant examples of deliberate chauvinism," his letter seemed such a deliberate attempt to be irritating/insulting, that there was serious debate as to whether we should deign to rebut it; but I volunteered to undertake the onerous task.

To begin with, his insinuations that Jan and Jeanne are mere figureheads for our friend Hank are particularly offensive. That he recognized the "STARLING typeface" is very interesting, since the Lutrells did none of the typing (it was done by the people listed in the front, on various typewriters); in fact they had nothing to do with the magazine but print it (except, of course, giving advice when it was asked for). Whether or not Hank can produce a fanzine that does not jump around, I cannot say; but to make the suggestion that he produces this one is just plain outrageous. I am unaware of the idiosyncrasies of his that have invaded this fanzine; the main editorial decisions are made by Jan, with the help of Jeanne. I don't believe Hank saw this issue before it was ready to go to press. Mr. Glicksohn seems to be suffering from some interesting delusions; but SoItGoes.]

#### LETTER FROM HARLAN ELLISON

Dear Ms. Bogstad & Ms. Gomoll:

First, let me express my admiration and a sense of delighted wonder at the excellence of your publication. I purposely refuse receipt of 99% of the fanzines that come slithering into my mail box, because they seem to me incredibly adolescent and pointy-headed. Filled with banalities and halfwitted analyses of what is being written in the genre these days. And that's when they are at their best. For the most part they are the effusions and maunderings of dips who might better serve the commonweal by spending their time planting trees rather than defacing the innocent paper made from cutting down trees.

But you two have published a magazine that informs, uplifts, enriches and speaks in a moderate voice of intelligence and profound wit. I commend you, and wish you all the best with future issues.

"The City as Idea" is excellent. Would that Roger Elwood had read it before he slapped together FUTURE CITIES, or whatever that thing was called. It is criticism and comment of the highest order.

I revel in the excellence of your feminist stance. Quite apart from my enthusiasm and commitment to the "movement," I marvel at the rationality of your approach. Not even the most slope-browed genitalia-protective nerd -- of whom the sf field unhappily contains more than a few -- could attempt to invalidate your assertions with paranoid shrieks of harry or shrew. When you make a point, you do it with irrefutable logic and slicing good taste. You two are dynamite.

As for the reviews of "A Boy and His Dog," I am forever in your debt for ameliorating Mr. Keveny's perplexed and rather silly analysis of the film with Ms. Gomoll's sharp and incisive view. I wish to Christ every nouveau-liberated twit who cannot see beyond the intentionally sexist rococo of the plot to the humanistic moral underneath could be made to read that review. What a pain in the keester to suffer the semi-literate observations of self-styled critics whose views of the world and human condition are on the level of My Weekly Reader. Keveny, for instance, dimly perceives that there is something alienating about the film, but hasn't the ideational abilities to grasp that it was purposeful, that the story presents a view that is neither misogynistic nor anti-male; it is misanthropic. A cautionary tale of survival, pure and simple, recommending a middle course between the aboveground world -- a paradigm of life in urban centers today -- and the Downunders -- which parallel life-style and morality in the vast Bible Belt areas of America today. Ms. Gomoll spots it instantly, and it informs her review with light and sense.

Your editorial, Ms. Bogstad, is a joy. It says what has needed to be said for decades. I hope, in stories like "Sleeping Dogs," "Croatoan," "Catman," "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs," "Adrift Just Off the Islets of Langerhans..." and others soon to be published, that I can be numbered among those male writers who have come to realize the treasures they've overlooked for so long in their failures of dealing with women in depth in fantasy fiction.

While I'm not a proselytizer, I do try to be a conscientious creator, and I'd be a fool, and I'd be selling my work short, were I not to make use of the riches available.

Again, all my best wishes to both of you. By what you publish, you ennoble the practice of fanzine publishing. You two are worth the entire shitload of lesser fanzines clotting the mainstream of amateur sf publishing.

[Philip Keveny: I'm glad that Harlan Ellison criticized my review in the way that he did. He has committed himself to one of the possible messages in A BOY AND HIS DOG. Mr. Ellison claims that the alienated world which he presented was purposeful; that he intended to evoke a certain response in the viewer. He refers to it as "a cautionary tale of survival, pure and simple." Somehow, if we don't shape up, because of what we are, this is what we will become. I suggest that within this framework the film is a failure. Where Ellison seeks to educate and admonish he has succeeded in irritating me and amusing many other viewers. The reaction that I have most often gotten as I discussed the film and Ellison's reaction to my criticism with friends goes something like this:

"He can't be serious. He took the film even more seriously than you did. Neither of you got the joke." (The last was from a person who said of the film: "That was the longest build-up to a punch line I've ever seen.")

The point is that A BOY AND HIS DOG is wide open to multifarious interpretations by viewers unfamiliar with the one, out of many, possible responses expected of them.

Even this one possible meaning does not seem to me to be effectively portrayed. A

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 32]

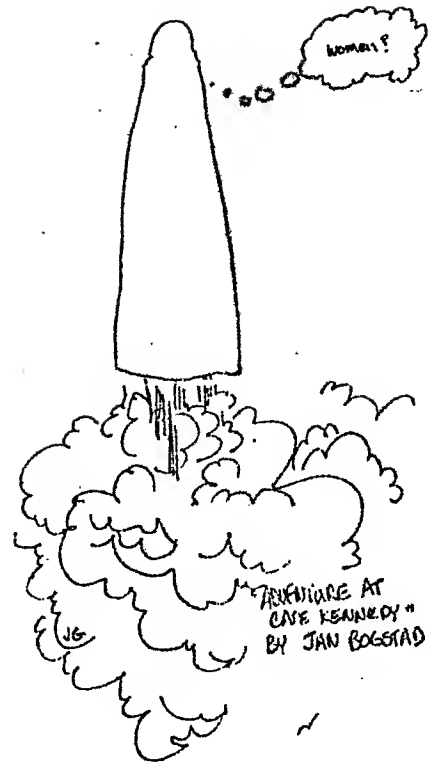
Having an adventure at Cape Kennedy, especially for the visitor-tourist, requires a great deal of imagination. On December 24, 1975, I visited the Visitor's Center there with some members of my family. The center was quite crowded that day with visitors from many states and countries, but the bus tours, the center's main attraction, were set up to handle the numbers of people present. I found them to be rather tame on the whole, being informational rather than adventuresome. This is understandable as the Space Center could never be an amusement park. Yet the information available was centered around the status of the various space programs and the machinery that keeps it in operation rather than discoveries that this machinery has allowed the scientific community to make. I was a little disappointed to find that I could not even purchase good pictures of Jupiter, the Moon, or other planetary bodies which have been recently investigated by the space program. I did find out about the various vehicles now in use and in use in the past for the discoveries that have been made.

As I mentioned, one high point of the visit is a two-hour bus tour of the installations open to the public. A bus takes about thirty people at a time around the center, stopping at two buildings, one where moon conditions were simulated and the other, a large Vehicle Assembly building. The bus passes launching pads, collections of out-of-use rockets, missiles and pieces thereof. There is a piped in commentary on the bus tour which describes all of the buildings, craft and other sights. As all over America, latent sexism prevails. There are female ticket sellers and hostesses, there are male bus-driver-tour guides and lecturers. Perhaps if our guide, Ray Brooks had been a woman, he would have known about the rumors of a woman now in training for the space program and the women athletes who originally trained for the first moon shots. Perhaps he knew and didn't think it was important to mention. As it was, he could pawn off my question with a cute "Women's Lib hasn't hit down here yet." Indeed. We are allowed to pay for the program with our tax money, but we are not allowed to participate in it!

In all fairness, I must admit that Mr. Brooks was entertaining and seemingly well informed about the expected topics. At times, he would stop the recorded commentary to tell us such things as the number of crocodiles on the installation (around 2000), and some of the history of the area. It seems that the Spanish had a lighthouse there before the creation of this country. We went by portions of terrain which were used by the astronauts to practice walking around in their space suits, preparatory to the moon-walks. We also passed site 36 which is being prepared for the Space Shuttle operations, the next major program on the Cape Kennedy schedule.

I found the simulators which were set up in building 38 to be the most aesthetically pleasing part of the tour. There were three of these peculiar assemblages in the building. They were supposed to simulate various stages of the now-accomplished moon landings so that the astronauts could practice the different operations required of them. The three which were still intact (I understood some of them had been disassembled as they were no longer needed) were composed of large pentagons and platforms, with some of their surfaces covered with high-gloss silver or gold colored foil. There was one which was used to simulate moon landing conditions so that they could practice the actual moon-setdown. According to our guide through the building, the astronauts technically crashed into the moon when they first tried this simulator.

We also stopped at the 8 acre Vehicle Assembly Building. Its most impressive feature is, understandably, its size. This is where various parts of a spacecraft are put together. Consequently, the roof is so high that there are 500 air vents in it to



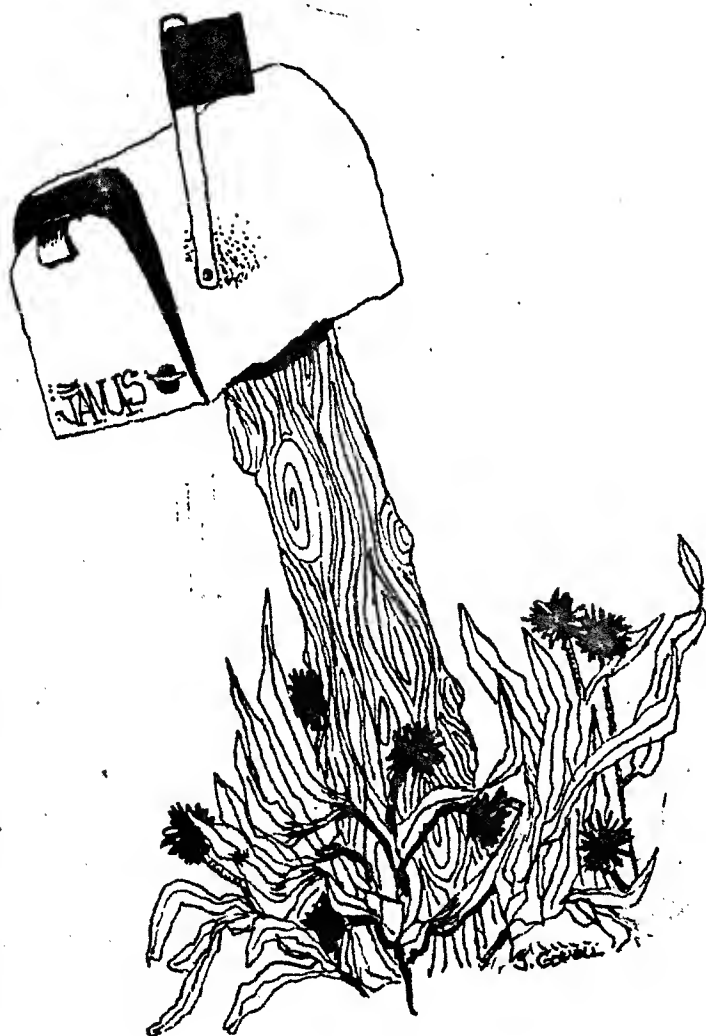
prevent moisture condensation on the 5 acre roof.

The Visitor's Center offers various exhibits of old and new spacecraft. One can also attend movies describing the space program and lectures about it. At the lecture I attended, Bob Byrd described the space shuttle operations, plans for a space station, weather satellites and the nature of the Mariner probes. He also discussed the implications for modern medicine which the development of equipment to monitor the astronaut's health processes in space have had. It seems that these systems have made it possible to monitor seriously ill heart patients and keep track of faulty organ functions in patients with other problems.

More information on the space program can be obtained from the local informational services across the country. For a list of such services, write NASA, Washington, D. C. 20546.

#### NOTES ON IN-COMING FANZINES

By Rick White



DON-O-SAUR 44: (Feb. 76) Don C. Thompson, 7498 Canosa Ct., Westminster, CO 80030. Available for trade, letter of comment (LoC), artwork, or 35¢/single issue, 6 issues/\$2.00, 12/\$3.50. A personal-type SF fanzine published "either bi-monthly, quarterly or irregularly."

KARASS 19: (Jan. 76) Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076. Available for news, letters, trade, artwork, articles, or 3/\$1.00. Consists mostly of news of fandom.

KYBEN 13: (Jan. 76) Jeff and Ann Smith, 1339 Weldon Ave., Baltimore, MD 21211. Single issue/ 35¢, 3/\$1.00, or usual. Contains articles, reviews, and good artwork.

LOCUS V. 9, #1: (17 Jan. 76) 34 Ridgewood Lane, Oakland, Ca 94611. 1/50¢, 15/\$6.00, 30/\$12.00 (individuals); \$10.00/yr. (15 issues) for institutions. The newspaper of the science fiction field.

NOTES FROM THE CHEMISTRY DEPT. #14: (Dec. 75) Denis Quane, Box CC, East Texas Sta., Commerce, TX 75428. (Artwork to Nancy Wallace, Chemistry Dept., E. Texas State Univ., Commerce, Texas 75428) Available for written material, artwork, or 30¢/issue. Contains reviews, articles on science & science fiction.

REQUIEM V. 2, #8: (Jan-Feb 76) Norbert Spehner, 455 Saint-Jean, Longueuil P. Q. Canada, J4H 2Z3. Available for trade or \$1.00 per issue, 6/\$5.00. This 'zine, which incidentally is in French, contains some rather interesting articles, notably one on the implications of Asimov's characterizations of Robots in THE ROBOTS. It also contains

news on Quebec fandom, short book reviews and fanzine reviews. [J.M.B.]

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW 16: (Feb 76) Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211. Single issue/\$1.25, 1 yr. (4 issues)/\$4.00, 2 yrs./\$7.00. This issue has an interview with Jerry Pournelle, articles by Barry Malzberg, John Brunner, Richard A. Lupoff, Michael G. Coney, many book reviews, and more.

SOUTH OF THE MOON 11: (Fall, 75) Tim C. Marion and David R. Ortman, 614 72nd St., Newport News, VA 23605. Available for apa information, trades, artwork, single/25¢, 4/\$1. An index of all generally available fannish amateur press associations.

STARLING 33: (Feb 76) Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell, 525 W. Main, Madison, WI 53703. Available for trade, artwork, LoC, articles, or 50¢ each, 5/\$2.00. Contains articles on SF, mystery, comics, book and movie reviews, and superior artwork.

# MOUNTAIN ROAD

By Thomas J. Murn



...the old mountain road, I remember, great gaping cavities in the asphalt, mud-holes, looking worse than death, because it had once carried so much life. It curved around the house and fell out of sight further down the long slope. In back of the house, the pine slopes went up and over the top of the mountlet, up and over the next mountlet to disappear in the wild green-brown haze that

merged with the horizon. The house wasn't an obvious thing, having long ago turned the color of natural wood, the last few chips of paint a dull testimony to caretakers long since gone. ...the mountain road, the house and

I was looking out of the side door, the light of a late afternoon filtering through the dust in the air, through the cracked window. I stood and stared at the hillside in back of the house, wild mutant understory creepers, wide-leaved thistles, fantastic sporal growth covering the dank places, the rocks covered with the shades of unreal green and orange.

I stood and stared until Jennifer called to me, and I turned, and greeted her in the usual fashion, and I could not remember coming here. Still, if I was lost, the contours of the man-made things in this place were somehow too familiar, too close to comforting old memories, to cause me much alarm. It was as if I was dreaming; and I stood and marveled at the colors of the spores on the exposed rocks on the hill, Jennifer called, and I turned and followed her into the quiet inner rooms.



The floor was of the same rough board as the outer walls of the house. Splinters scraped and caught at my boot soles as I shuffled down the hallway behind Jennifer. We walked slowly into the sitting room, and I saw Things on the walls and floor and shelves of the room, chattel somehow familiar, though I had not seen anything comparable in . . . many years. Nothing like these things which made my hands shiver uncontrollably, and my head ache. There was a shattered plastic box in the corner of the room, and shards of glass in front of the thing caught the faint light and threw it back at my eyes. Odd, I thought, that a bit of plastic and glass could make me feel so faint - to twist me by its mere dead presence--

But like the road outside, and like Jennifer, the box was remnant; tidal wash from a ship long since gone down.

It was late in the morning when I awoke to the sounds of giggles and screams coming from somewhere outside. I sat up, and Jennifer, my constant companion now, was in the chair across the room, just sitting, watching me. I went back by the door and looked out on the road where two girls were jumping rope. In all my confused suspension of mind, I had not thought that there would be any other occupant of the wild green slopes which stretched for many kilometers in every direction. But there they were, their clothes rough strips of bundled rags. Two girls! Jumping rope! Now this was something I remembered very clearly, though the girls before me, full bosomed, dirty faces beginning to wrinkle with age, could hardly be Candy and Cathy. They used to have their friends over after school, jumping rope in the driveway. . . If I was at home, I'd go out and move the car...

I shuffled back to the sitting room, sat down on the couch and cried. Jennifer tried to comfort me, first with coos of sympathy and then with whispers. But the dream of horror had become too real. I didn't think that I could ever move from the couch again to confront the waking nightmare that awaited me outside. . . . .

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THE KABOODLIAN CHRONICLES (EPILOG)  
BY JOHN BARTELT

[which is a mildly revised version of the Epilog to THE SECRET OF KABOODLE, which is also the prologue to A CLAVICLE FOR KABOODLEWITZ, which will probably never be written anyhow]

Some years after the death of Fubel Kaboodle, (by one truck or two, no one was sure) a new religious sect sprang up. Kaboodle was its patron saint, its one great prophet. It consisted mostly of incompetent EE's, bad skiers, unlicensed CB'ers, ultra-radical Heinleinians, Trekkies, and congenital idiots. Its leader was the reincarnation of Pavel Nelizov (if you thought the first one was bad...!), going under the name Peter Nathaniel Breynn, or P. Nat Breynn, for short.



Naturally, this motley bunch was very interested in the life of their hero, Fubel Kaboodle (though, to show you how dumb they were, they thought "Kaboodle" was short for "Kaboodlewitz"). In their studies, they uncovered a previously unrecorded episode in the life of Fubel Kaboodle, and what is more, from this episode, they were able to discover the Secret of Kaboodle (!!!) However, this episode was so shocking, so unbelievably immoral, showed such unmitigated gall (not necessarily all on the part of Kaboodle; "others" were involved), that someone at the top of the organization (the head witch-doctor)(whose initials are Peter Nathaniel Breynn) decided that that part of the story of the life of Kaboodle should be censored from the official history of his

life (as being prepared by the Knights of Kaboodlewitz). However, one of our underground agents uncovered the official report on the incident. He was later electrocuted to keep from revealing this secret (not the Secret, though that is part of this secret). Before he was killed, however, he was able to get a report out (by telephone, not radio), in which he read the official document. The following is that story, which in the Kaboodle chronology would precede Part 6, and probably follow Part 5.

There was in the same land as Fubel Kaboodle an organization known as GOC. Speculation as to what those letters mean has run to such things as Goony Obfuscater's Club, or Galumphing Obtuse Cretins, or Gibbering Oafish Clowns. Once upon a time, the GOC...[CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE.....]

had run a Ham Radio club. But that time was no more. So the chiefs of the GOC said, "Let us sell the Ham Radio equipment, that we may increase our coffers." Thus it came to pass, that it became known to Fubel Kaboodle and Pavel Nelizov that this equipment would be sold. And those of the GOC did not know the value of the equipment; Kaboodle and Nelizov offered them money, and they took it. And the time was come that the equipment was to be picked up; and lo, there was a snafu (which, in the words of the prophet, is meant to say, "situation normal all fucked up"). And a day passed, and the snafu was overcome (they hit it from behind, while it looketh not). And the doors were opened, and the Hams (that is, Kaboodle and Nelizov, for they were of the tribe of Ham) went in and took what they had bought. And they



pointed and said, "This is of no use to you; we will take it off your hands;" and they did. They took, and they took, and they took; they took oscilloscopes and phone patches, they took cables and more cables, they took crystals and switches; they pulled things off the floor and out of the ceiling; and behold, they would have taken the paint, had it not been nailed to the walls.

And the Hams took their loot back to their rooms, and were very pleased with themselves, for they had taken GOC. And they gloated over their prizes, for they had paid little money for what they had bought, and had stolen the rest.

And it was at this time Fubel Kaboodle realized the One, Great Truth. And lo, he realized the danger in revealing this Truth, and he kept it to himself, and it became his secret. And the forces of evil tried to discover this secret, and they could not; for Kaboodle hid it well, deep within the depths of his murky mind. But this great Truth is now revealed to the believers of Kaboodlewitz. It offers great help and advice in living, and in dealing with others, and in knowing thyself (without having to call the FBI). For the great Truth is:

NEVER TRUST A HAM!

Amen, amen, meaning, you said it brother. For it is said, "I never metta Ham I liked."

A REVIEW OF THE FILM, SOLARIS,  
BASED UPON THE NOVEL SOLARIS,  
BY STANISLAW LEM

By Jeanne Gomoll

Solaris is a Polish-made film that won a Cannes Festival Award last year, and was based upon the novel by Stanislaw Lem. It played only briefly here in Madison and not at all in the theatres in Milwaukee, which is of course not surprising for a foreign film. Tourists to the core, commercial Wisconsin theatres tend to re-

ject beforehand the value of any movie which communicates using anything but English. Solaris however, seems to deserve the lack of attention: it is a boring film.

The story revolves around the survivors aboard a space station in stationary orbit



\*Solaris

over the ocean of a planet, Solaris, and of the psychiatrist who is sent to the station to determine whether the continued study of the planet ("Solaristics"), is worth the cost. The psychiatrist personifies the objective, non-imaginative **stereotype** of the scientist. Even before he leaves the earth he is pitted against a perhaps unbalanced, perhaps enlightened, astronaut (who is returned from the space station **unable** to cope with the incomprehensible visions he encountered during his flight down into the atmosphere of Solaris). The scientist scoffs at the astronaut's terror at, and belief in what ~~is~~ is beyond his understanding: What can be seen or felt, can be **measured**. What cannot be measured -- is not.

Upon arriving at the space station, our "hero" discovers only two survivors onboard. What they are survivors of, where the bodies of their dead colleagues have gone to, why the space station is such a bizaare mess, or even where (or what) Solaris is -- all remain mysteries. Like Kafka's hero K, the psychiatrist never seems able to articulate any applicable questions. "How long have you been here?" he asks one of the space station survivors as they watch a materialized hallucination drift past **dressed** in a shorty blue negligé. "Is it Christmas yet?" is his helpful reply.

Well soon the psychiatrist witnesses his own dreams/nightmares coming to life in tangible flesh: his wife who has been dead for quite a few years and about whom he feels considerable (but again, never fully explained) guilt arrives. All three persons aboard the space station are thus hosts for their particular nightmares, "guests," as they are referred to: a blue-nightied tease, a reproachful wife, and lastly, an absurd, furtive dwarf. They must come to terms with these projected skeletons from their unconsciousnesses.

A video-tape recorded by a dead member of the crew and left for his friend, the psychiatrist, clears up no mysteries despite its promise to "explain everything." All we learn is that "it's not insanity," which I suppose is somewhat comforting to the psychiatrist.

It is finally decided that what must be happening is that the ocean below is actually a living organism, and is seizing upon their thoughts and dreams and projecting them into physical form aboard the space station. (Our "hero" tries to get rid of his guest, by shooting her off into space in a small rocket, but the next morning, like the stubble of a beard, she is back again.) No matter how this conclusion concerning the nature of Solaris' ocean is arrived at, it is further decided that the only solution is to -- quick! -- radio the psychiatrist's brain patterns to the ocean's surface. Once done, the guests obligingly take the hint and go home. Everything is fine and tension ceases.

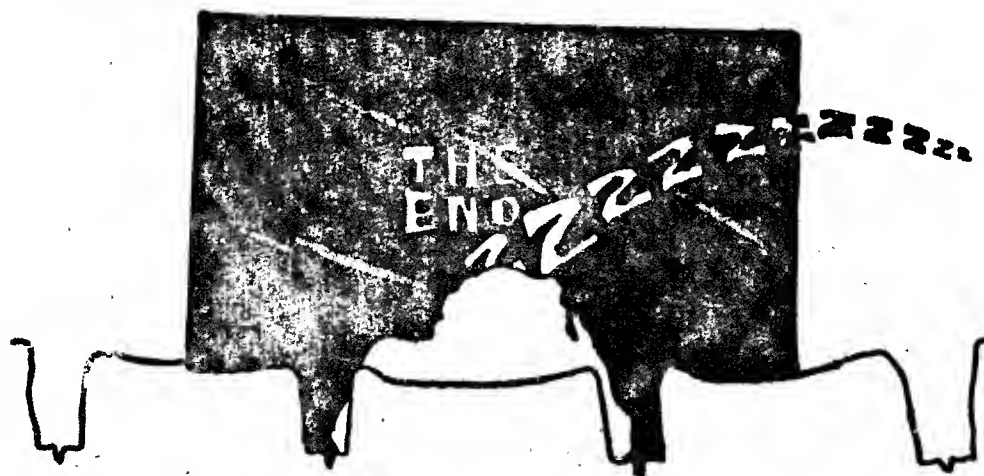
On the ocean surface below, islands begin to form and on one of the islands is materialized our hero's home, where he or his double wanders about the grounds, stares morosely at a pond, walks slowly up to the house where he watches a friend through the window, stacking books on piles and getting wet. Why he is stacking books, I don't know, but I could see that the reason he was dripping, was because it is raining inside the house... (end of film.)

...Which is unfortunately not a surprising note at all. Throughout the film, strange, inexplicable, self-conscious SYMBOLS have a way of wandering across the screen: a mysterious restless stallion during the early earth scenes; objects aboard the space station, which seem incongruous with the spartan necessity of such a location, are littered all over the place (a shadeless French Provincial lamp, for instance), -- but most of all, conversation that only frustrates, and long moments in which the camera focusses upon a face bearing an expression of bewilderment that could be no more puzzled than mine was at the time.

Perhaps all of this game ("Confuse-The-Audience") was on purpose. Throughout the gruelling 2½ hours, I gradually gleaned the "Message" to suggest that people can never comprehend any really new concept. If we explore the world beyond our own (and not necessarily physically beyond our own -- thus the ambiguity concerning the place or idea of Solaris) -- we will only impose our preconceptions, our ideas about what should be. To encounter what is radically "different" from ourselves, and beyond our narrow

capability to accept, we as humans can only go mad.

Given that interpretation, the directors (and author's?) preoccupation with a mood reminiscent of Kubrick's French Provincial Bedroom Scene in 2001 may be to some purpose. Maybe the idea was to trap the audience into such a frenzy of frustration ("Why doesn't he ask some decent questions??? What is going on??? Why is it raining inside that house??? How much longer is this movie going to last???)-- that when we finally "get" the message, we are supposed to laugh at ourselves for even trying to understand some of the more obtuse images. We are supposed to be realizing that there are things that we cannot understand, that when we try to impose meaning upon the stallion or the indoor rain-shower, or try to figure out where Solaris is supposed to be, we are only falling into the same trap the psychiatrist-character falls into. We are destroying (because we fear) the idea of alienness by imposing our self-serving and untruthful analogies upon it in order to understand, just as the men on the spacestation impose their brain patterns and force the ocean into a comprehensible (islanded), even nostalgic form.



I think that the idea behind the film is an interesting one: I thourally enjoyed it when used in the far better film by Antonnionni, THE PASSENGER, and I plan to read Stanislaw Lem's novel soon. But I repeat my original opinion that the film itself is boring. Maybe it has something to do with the movie's incredibly sluggish pace. We stare endlessly at faces which stare in turn about themselves with no clue beyond their confusion as to what they are thinking. The movie could easily have been cut to half its length. Maybe it also had something to do with the awful subtitles: obviously only a small portion of what was being said was being translated and that with a complete lack of imagination or life. [So inadequate was the job, that only a quarter of the credits were translated from script, the "little names" seemingly not worthy of revelation.]

But most of all, I objected to the pompousness of the director (and/or screenwriter) who seems to have believed that the audience would accept the sensation of being merely confused as being an adequate analogy/metaphor for an encounter with an alien, truly extraordinary experience. Ambiguity is not a virtue in itself.

...And it most certainly does not illustrate (if anything does) that the human mind is incapable of raising its consciousness to encompass a really new and radically different idea/experience.



Since I've practically run out of short stories for Janus, I had to find a new way of getting into it. So, hopefully, this column will be appearing every Janus from now on, until Jan gets sick of me. I imagine she might want to stick in her own comments here and there, twisting my meanings and generally cluttering thing up.(1) Primarily, though, it will consist of my own opinions...now, if I can just formulate some opinions.(2) I'll also be sticking in reviews-of-sorts, and ideas and speculations on themes near and dear to the heart of Science Fiction.(3)

Like Time Travel. This comes to mind because of two books I've recently purchased and read, both reprints. The first is THE YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN, by Wilson Tucker, an Ace Special. For 75¢, you can't beat it. It's a story about time travel, but one that doesn't deal with paradoxes(4) and such (in that respect, it's like that obscure Wells novel)(5); Tucker deliberately avoids them. Instead, he supposes that the government has been given certain predictions based on various and sundry arcane statistics by people who are in the business of making predictions. Now, suppose the government (specifically, the President and a few Congressmen) has a project so secret, the Pentagon doesn't know about it (and that's one helluva secret); and the secret project is, of course, a time machine. Now what does this President (a weak President, who suddenly had to replace a strong President, and then is re-elected in 1976 (the book was copyrighted 1970; sounds a little prophetic, maybe?)) do with this time machine? As it's first manned test, the protagonist and his two compatriots take a jaunt two years into the future, to November 6, 1980. The President wants to know if he'll be re-elected (in re-reading this section, I detected a slight error in logic; but it's quite incidental to the story). The primary target: circa 2000 AD, to see if those predictions are going to come true. That may sound unimaginative, but there are certain limits to the capabilities of the Time Displacement Vehicle. And it turns out to be not at all dull (did I say no paradoxes? perhaps not quite; there is a hint of a closed circle in time (maybe even two circles)).

The other book is Larry Niven's collection ALL THE MYRIAD WAYS (which first appeared in 1971 (hmmm; this second printing is dated December, 1975; I bought it more than a week before that; da wonders o' science) (it's now a buck and a half, from Ballantine)). (An aside: I really loved the one piece, "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex," about the problems of keeping the Kryptonian race alive, trying to mate Superman to an Earthwoman (Lois Lane, for instance); for someone like me, whose first exposure to fantastic tales and pseudo-science-fiction was



the DC comic book hero, it was absolutely delightful. But Niven forgot about all those Kryptonians in the bottled city of Kandor). It includes two speculative articles, one on teleportation, one on time travel (he makes some pretty good arguments against the possibility of travelling into the past and changing it); and besides the title story, "All the Myriad Ways," there's a second story on the Alternate Universe theme, "For a Foggy Night" (there's a lot of other good stuff, too, like the Hugo-winner, "Inconstant Moon"). Anyway, this got me thinking about time travel in a Universe which is of the branching variety (that is, full of alternate universes (small 'u')). Every time someone makes a decision, the Universe splits. Now suppose you go back in time in this branching Universe; presumably, you follow your branches down toward the trunk, and you would get into your past; but could you find your way back up? (I've already written a story on this, so sit still and read on). (In my story, the Time Traveller not only couldn't pick which branch he followed up, but could get thrown into any random future. This was mostly a plot device, but I can justify it, at least a little. At each branching point, the time machine must decide which branch it will take. It will choose at random I imagine; but maybe now and then it would just make a jump onto the wrong track (perhaps through an application of the Uncertainty Principle; more about this later); and considering the huge number of branches formed each second (again, more on this later), it could very quickly end up almost anywhere)(but then, for travelling forward in time, there's always relativity; all you have to do is accelerate up to near the speed of light).

Now, suppose that you go back in time and kill your grandfather when he is a little boy; but in another universe, you decide not to kill him, so on some of those branches, you would still be born, to go back in time; this defuses the "Grandfather Paradox" (and yes, this was in the story, too--and perhaps I should call it the "Grandparent Paradox"). I think most of the other paradoxes would also stop being paradoxical. So much for that.

But then I got to thinking about alternate universes.(6) How many of them are there? Probably an infinite number;(7) but how many new ones come into existence every second? How many decisions do people make every second? And it can't be just humans; think of the probability of myriad alien races out there; and the Universe must split any time anyone of them makes a decision. What about animals? Do dogs make decisions? What about chimpanzees? Or amoebas? What about subatomic particles? When you get down to that level, physics becomes merely statistical; couldn't you say a particle 'decides' when to break down? Clearly, then, the number of decisions humans make is insignificant. But does that mean we can't put any limits on the number of them at all? Maybe not, but then again...

There is a very important principle in modern physics, known as the Uncertainty Principle (or Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle); it says we can know things only to a certain accuracy; and not only us: the rest of the physical universe (or physical Universe) can know it to a certain accuracy; you can create or destroy a small amount of matter, for a short period of time (a very short period of time)(more on this later)...within the limits of Uncertainty). To misquote the Good Doctor Asimov, Uncertainty is very certain.(8)

Now suppose we look at the Universe in the beginning: (9) it consists of an infinite number of universes, all exactly identical (I may be violating the Uncertainty Principle in my assumptions, but I don't

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think it matters too much); in essence you have a single universe. Now suppose some little miniscule 'event' takes place. It only takes place in half of the universes (roughly; but then half of infinity is infinity; but I don't want to get started on that); in effect the Universe has split in two (call the universe where the event took place 'A'; where it didn't, 'a'); now a second event takes place in some of the 'A' universes, and a different event takes place in some of the 'a' universes; we now have AB, Ab, aC and ac (the last is where nothing has happened); so now we have four universes.(10) (In all of this, I'm assuming the universes can not interact in any way; what happens in one doesn't matter to the others).

Now the Uncertainty Principle: after a long time, a lot of events have taken place; there are a lot of different universes; but how many can we distinguish from each other? The logic here becomes fuzzy, I admit; but it seems intuitively, to me, that the number should be equal to the total amount of energy (including mass as energy) in the universe, times the length of time it has existed, divided by 'h', Planck's constant (that comes in from uncertainty--the uncertainty in the measurement of the energy, times the uncertainty in the measurement of time should equal (within an order of magnitude...which is as close as any of these calculations will be, at best)h). I assumed an amount of energy for our universe, and took a good estimate for the time from the big bang, and figured that there would be about 10 to the 120th power (within a factor of a million) universes, in the Universe. That is a lot. Also, I would guess that about 10 to the 100th power new universes come into existence each second (again, within a factor of a million or billion)(and yes, that is a 'googol', but that's such a stupid term, I never use it). I'm beginning to see some possible errors in logic, but it was fun fooling around with the numbers.

Back to time travel for a minute. Another oft raised objection to the possibility of travelling backwards in time is tied in with the law of Conservation of Energy. If we throw a kilogram of mass back a century, that's like creating it there. One way out is to pull a kilogram of mass forward(11), simultaneously (it would probably be easy enough to grab a kilo of air)(in fact...; no, I think I'll save that for a story--oh, what the hell; remember, you heard it here first: what if a really polluted society (I mean, their air is polluted) started shipping air out of some time long past, and sent back material, just for ballast?)(12) Anyway, this would still leave the time of transit with energy unconserved. But if you did it fast enough, you could get away with it, because of the Uncertainty Principle (believe me, it could work; inside the nucleus of the atom, certain particles are created and destroyed, out of nothing and into nothing; it is part of the strong nuclear force; and without that, there wouldn't be anything but hydrogen (I am; therefore, there is Uncertainty)). Then to send a kilogram back in time, the time of transit would have to be a little less than 10 to the minus 50th power of a second (that's a hundredth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second), whether it's going back a second or a century. To send back two kilograms, you'd have to do it in half the time.

Now, if I can just build a time machine.(13)

Do I have a little room left, Jan? Probably not, but I'll continue on anyway. The December 22nd issue of NEWSWEEK magazine contained a five page article on SF, entitled, "Science Fiction: The Great Escape"

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(the "Great Escape"? Good Lord, aren't we beyond that yet?). The article caused me to fire off a letter of criticism, something I've never done before; I rather doubt, however, that it will be printed; they will be deluged by a flood of letters of outrage from Fandom (not to mention Trekkies). Most of the following criticisms will be a paraphrase of part of that letter. The article placed undue emphasis on movie and TV science fiction, while literary SF was relegated to the last page; the writer stated that SF could be divided into four parts: movies, TV, and two categories of literary, the one 'space opera', 'the other' which "yearns for recognition as art". This is ridiculous. Fandom was almost totally ignored. The writer did have a few kind words for Ursula K. LeGuin (at least I thought he did; I'm having trouble finding them now); there were the usual cries of lack of characterization; and it was painfully obvious that the writer had read little, if any, of the material he was supposed to be writing about. Finally, I wonder about the attitude he took as he approached this assignment. (14)



NEWSWEEK  
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(212) 350-2000

1/13/76

To Whom It May Concern:

You may be interested to know that as of 2300 GMT 1/12/76, in consequence of certain irresponsible statements published in the 12/22/75 issue of Newsweek, Terran mortal Peter Prescott has been placed on probation by the Intergalactic Council. Should the subject prove resistant to standard rehabilitation and reconditioning techniques, the council will submit a referendum on liquidation and recycling. In that event, your letter will be tallied among the affirmative votes.

Meanwhile, we have been asked to extend the council's apologies and best wishes.

Sincerely, Madeleine Edmondson  
For the Editors

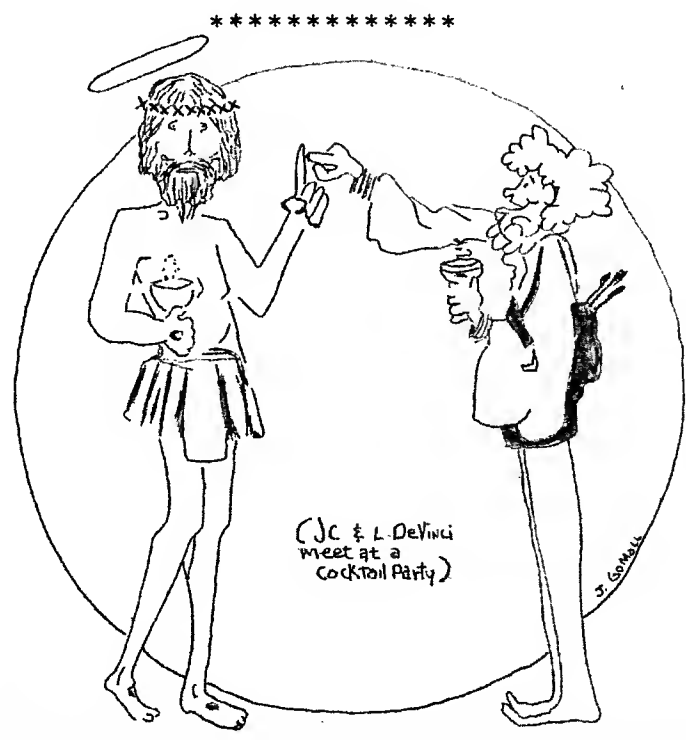
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Well, I'm sure I've run over my allotted space now. And used up so many topics, I won't be able to write a second column (but don't bet on it). It was a lot of fun. Now, if I could just get it syndicated! (15)

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- (1) Well, somebody has to stick around to decipher your interesting prose constructions, making them accessible to other mere mortals who are dependant on logical progressions to understand your thoughts.
- (2) You mean outside of the one that you are the final authority on all matters and thus ~~un~~reproachable?
- (3) So now Science Fiction, which Jeanne (the managing editor) doesn't even consider to be a distinct genre becomes personified. It even has a heart! Male or female, John? Perhaps a muse figure?

- (4) As I recall, Silverberg does a lot with time travel paradoxes, very tasty too...
- (5) I think he means the little known work THE TIME MACHINE. Why it's so obscure that they had to bring it out as a classic comic reprint in January.
- (6) You always did have a ~~one track~~ persistant mind.
- (7) ...a safe assumption...
- (8) I certainly think I understand what you are espousing but your certainty leaves me a bit uncertain...
- (9) Taking into consideration that such a posture is a logical impossibility, as we weren't there...
- (10) Your arithmetic is flawless...
- (11) I recall a Heinlein novel, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD (I think that was the start of his sexual obsession novels) where gold coins were used to offset the mass displacement which occurred from sending people into the past. It seems that the travellers, Farnham and his 'wife' and sons returned to what was was an alternate past also...
- (12) I read a story where someone on earth had created an invention which sent garbage off into an alternate universe--someone over there finally got mad--it made a fairly good story.
- (13) Wow! You'd really do all that to the past? It's bad enough that we bequeath it to the future. At least the future will have the benefit of the cumulative scientific developments of past ages so that they have a hope of coping with it.
- (14) Luckily, we could wait to send this issue to the presses until John got his reply back, and the letter on the preceeding page is it...
- (15) NEWSWEEK might be interested...





This piece is a good example of how a new generation receives Ray Bradbury; further proof that good writing never goes out of style. Dave tells me that he was prompted to investigate Bradbury when he read his most recent publication, *THE HALLOWEEN TREE*, Bantam Books, 1974.

RAY BRADBURY'S SALUTE TO  
LIFE  
by Dave Medaris

"...we can go on from Earth to other planets and on out to the stars and exist for hundreds of thousands and millions of years. That to me is tremendously exciting."

-Ray Bradbury<sup>1</sup>

"It is good to renew one's wonder," said the philosopher. "Space travel has again made children of us all."

-Ray Bradbury, *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*<sup>2</sup>

Ray Bradbury's stories seem to be average science fiction stories if skimmed over or taken lightly. However, his stories can become as complex as any other modern writer's. When reading Bradbury, the question which first comes to mind concerns Bradbury's view of life. Does he think we will survive?

After reading several of his books, one could answer that he is an optimist, since he almost always ends his stories like fairy tales; the good guys or humanity usually win(s). But surely the dark clouds that invariably congeal in the first three-fourths of his stories mean something. What is Bradbury trying to say with his pervading light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel writing style? What happens when you weigh the optimism with the pessimism?

To begin with, a discussion of Bradbury's style is in order. Perhaps his most vividly dark and brooding novel is *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*. This is a chilling book only because of the effectiveness in the use of description, both of settings and of the people. Bradbury's descriptive passages in this book make you want to look over your shoulder, to see if the carnival is about to swallow you whole. From the beginning, the carnival is described so as to give an impression of purest evil and foreboding:

"In the meadow, the tents, the carnival, waited. Waited for someone, anyone to wade along the grassy surf. The great tents filled like bellows. They softly issued forth exhalations of air that smelled like ancient yellow beasts."<sup>3</sup>

The two men who ran the carnival in the book are also described evilly:

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"This second man was tall as a lamp post. His pale face, lunar pockmarks denting it, cast light on those who stood below. His vest was the color of fresh blood. His eyebrows, his hair, his suit were licorice black..."<sup>4</sup>

The man being described is Mr. Dark, of Cooger and Dark's carnival. Mr. Dark doubles as the tattooed man, who along with Cooger terrorizes Jim Nightshade and Will Halloway and the town in which they live. The verbal paintings of Cooger, Dark and their carnival are quite obviously evil.

On the other hand, Bradbury can paint beautiful settings and people. At the end of FAHRENHEIT 451, Guy Montag, the protagonist, is befriended by a band of hobo-scholars when he is branded a traitor by society. He escapes the city, the symbol of modernization and mechanization, and heads into the 'wilderness,' into a peaceful and optimistic landscape:

"There must have been a billion leaves on the land; he waded in them, a dry river smelling of hot cloves and warm dust. And the other smells! There was a smell like a cut potato from all the land, raw and cold and white from having the moon on it most of the night."<sup>5</sup>

"The Million Year Picnic," from THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, is perhaps Bradbury's most optimistic piece. The settings here are of beautiful Martian cities, some in ruins, being seen by a family on a boat floating down a river. They have escaped the final war on earth, and are trying to decide on a city to make their home. They decide on the sixth one they come upon:

"There were fifty or sixty huge structures still standing, streets were dusty but paved, and you could see one or two old centrifugal fountains still pulsing wetly in the plazas."<sup>6</sup>

Bradbury's good people, his protagonists, seem to hold his hope. He makes these people either children or outcasts from society. Children are innocents, immune to harm by average people, while outcasts have the courage to stand up to the society and speak out. In these people Bradbury places his optimism.

In FAHRENHEIT 451, Bradbury creates a character who befriends Guy Montag, the fugitive fireman-turned-traitor. His name is Professor Faber, and he has been assigned to a low-profile life due to his scholarly and illegal liking for books. Montag is the catalyst which makes Faber return to action--albeit small, quiet action. This action makes Faber feel morally strong, and gives meaning to an otherwise empty life:

"I feel alive for the first time in years," said Faber. "I feel I'm doing what I should have done a lifetime ago. For a little while I'm not afraid. Maybe it's because I'm doing the right thing at last."<sup>7</sup>

Bradbury's children are best exemplified by Joe Pipkin in THE HALLOWEEN TREE. Pip, as he is called by his friends, is the typical golden-pure boy we all worshipped and followed as children. When Halloween rolls around, everyone of the boys in Pip's neighborhood clamber out of their houses at the same time, colliding and jostling and laughing until they realize that Pip isn't with them. Bradbury describes the boys' feelings:

"Joe Pipkin was the greatest boy who ever lived. The grandest boy who ever fell out of a tree and laughed at the joke. The finest boy who ever raced around the track, winning, and



then, seeing his friends a mile back somewhere, stumbled and fell, waited for them to catch up, and joined, breast and breast, breaking the winner's tape."<sup>8</sup>

All of the people and settings and descriptions that Bradbury uses contribute ultimately to the success of the books themselves, and the books obviously congeal around these descriptive passages in their overall mood.

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES is Bradbury's most frightening book, due mostly to the chilling descriptive passages of the carnival and Mr. Dark. The mood at the beginning of the story is optimistic--summer has just ended and Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade are in school a month. Then the carnival comes, heralded by an eerie calliope whistle, and the shadows begin to cover the town. These shadows stay over the town until defeated by Will and his father and Jim. But even then, the danger isn't over:

"'Oh yes,' said Dad. 'We got to watch out the rest of our lives. The fight's just begun.'"<sup>9</sup>

In THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, Bradbury prophesies doom in "There Will Come Soft Rains" and "The Silent Towns." In these two stories the end of Earth is imminent. "The Silent Towns" documents the actions of Walter Gripp, who thinks himself the last man on Mars. Everyone else has been called back to Earth to fight in the war. It is obvious that they will never return.

"There Will Come Soft Rains" is the apocalyptic story of the human race as represented in Earth's influence. The people have all returned to Earth for the war. The story uses the symbol of one of the last Earth style houses on Mars being burnt and dying to symbolize the death of Earth and our civilization:

"At ten o'clock the house began to die.

"The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!"<sup>10</sup>

The house dies despite last-minute efforts to save itself, not unlike the last-minute efforts of civilization to save itself from the holocaust.

THE HALLOWEEN TREE, on the other hand, is optimistic throughout, despite its normally scary subject material, Halloween. Bradbury tells us that Halloween, although frightening to us, originated as a celebration of life. Death was not to be mourned, but a time to realize the goodness of being alive.

The same can be said of "The Million Year Picnic," the final story of THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES. The Earth has just blown itself up in an atomic holocaust, but one family has escaped by rocket to Mars. They search the dead Martian cities for a place to live and learn from past mistakes, and try to save what little is left of civilization.

This is an example of the way Bradbury ends his stories optimistically. Despite the end of Earth, despite oppression in society, despite carnivals which are totally evil, despite evil men, there is still hope.

The last question that remains is, how does Bradbury feel about his writing, his outlook on life, and what is his background, which has shaped his writing style? Finally, is he optimistic or pessimistic?

Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1920. He grew up in a typical childhood filled-with-wonder world. He attributes his optimism to his childhood years, when he was growing up in this magical world:

"I fell in love with motion pictures, and with comics, and with magic tricks, and with all kinds of illusions, when I was very young. Things like the Oz books."<sup>11</sup>

His early tastes and experiences in science fiction were with the old Buck Rogers comic strip:

"I lived hysterically, waiting for that hour every day when Buck Rogers came into the house."<sup>12</sup>

Bradbury's writing career took all of these early experiences in science fiction, the comic strip, the movies, and it flowed out of his fingertips into his writing. These early childhood experiences gave him the outlook on life that he has always kept, an optimism that continues to grow, and which comes across in his writing.

"There are so many crazy, lovely things to do in this world,"<sup>13</sup> says Bradbury, adding, "I've always lived at the top of my hysteria."<sup>14</sup>

When writing his stories, Bradbury's aim is not to prophesy doom, but to warn us about what the future holds if we continue on the path we're on:

"I am not so much a science fiction writer as a fantasist, moralist, visionary. I am a preventor of futures, not a predictor of them."<sup>15</sup>

Bradbury's philosophy is best summed up in this optimistic quote:

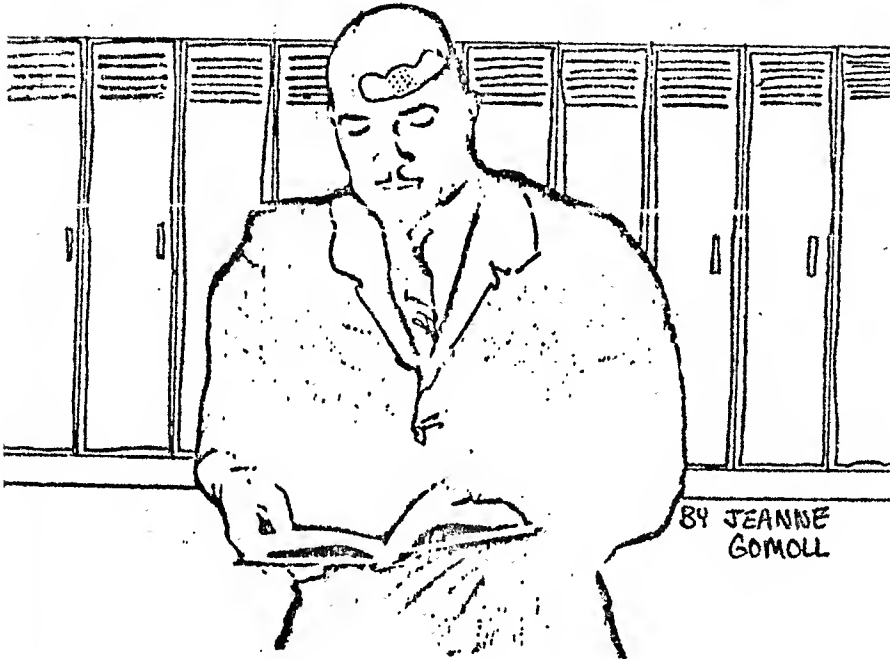
"I believe we are better than we think we are, and worse than we can imagine, which gives me hope. Yes, hope, hope, hope! We will survive our worst attempts to destroy ourselves."<sup>16</sup>

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1. Ray Bradbury, interview in UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION #1 (New York, Magazine Management Co., Marvel Comics Group, 1974) p 74.
2. Bradbury, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (New York, Bantam, 1972) frontispiece.
3. Bradbury, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES (New York, Bantam, 1963) p 40.
4. Ibid. p 42.
5. Bradbury, FAHRENHEIT 451 (New York, Ballantine, 1963) p 128.
6. Bradbury, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, p 177.
7. Bradbury, FAHRENHEIT 451, p 117.
8. Bradbury, HALLOWEEN TREE (New York, Bantam, 1974) p 7.
9. Bradbury, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, p 213.
10. Bradbury, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, p 170.
11. Bradbury, UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION INTERVIEW, p. 34.
12. Ibid., p 35.
13. Ibid., p 39.
14. Ibid., p 34.
15. Ibid., p 78.
16. Ibid., p 78.

# HEINLEIN

IS NOT HERE --- THE SPEECH WAS



Heinlein hints several times at what is perhaps the basis of his obsession with his own death. In "Elsewhen" (1941), for instance, one of his characters states:

"When you die, you won't die all over, no matter how intensely you may claim to. It is an emotional impossibility for any man to believe in his own death."

[speakers emphasis]<sup>1</sup>

Certainly Heinlein has amply demonstrated his own intense rejection of the concept of his own mortality, and so - instead of referring to Heinlein's obsession with death, I should perhaps speak to the subject of his focus on life, and the search for a personal immortality.\*

"Elsewhen" is a rather bad story about the idea that inter-time/inter-dimensional travel is a personal ability based upon "right-thinking." It is nevertheless interesting in that it demonstrates another of Heinlein's continuing crea-

tions of certain characters in possession of extra-human powers. The professor-philosopher hero of "Elsewhen" discovers that the true nature of time is analogous to a rolling landscape, the lowest level of which is that of extreme probability, and the highest, least-accessible portions of which are extreme improbability. "Roads" or timelines crisscross the timescape; one tends to remain on one of these for one's lifetime, but by achieving the "correct" frame of mind, one can switch roads at junctions, take short-cuts on the road one is traveling, or even climb out of one track up into the heights of improbability. Keeping this world-view in mind, one can place all of Heinlein's works on the chart of his Future History without contradiction, for his diagrammed vision then becomes a topological adventure with emphasis on a probable road, but with frequent excursions up into the improbable hills and escarpments surrounding the primary path. The professor, of course, is able to travel in this way and tutors the students attending his seminar to do so also. One student, a religious fanatic, climbs the mountains of improbability and finds a "heaven," as formally described in Christian mythology. "...I have sat at the foot of the Golden Throne and sung hosannas to His name."<sup>2</sup> Other students create/visit other personally appropriate worlds.

\*It seemed appropriate to introduce my discussion of Heinlein on the UW campus last week with the statement: "I have an announcement...Heinlein has died...And has had his brain transplanted into my body..." --since, in advertising the event, we had had some difficulties communicating the fact that a discussion about and not by Heinlein was to take place.

The professor counsels the doubtful Howard: "...I suspect that the conventional hereafter is real to anyone who believes in it wholeheartedly, as Martha evidently did, but I expect you to follow a pattern in accordance with the beliefs of an agnostic..."<sup>3</sup>

The story simply "stops" - the plot never develops beyond an illustrated lecture of the professor's (and Heinlein's) theory, but the Berkeleyan idea - that individuals with "the necessary intellectual strength and courage," and conviction in their real existence can create worlds (and post-life worlds) to their own liking - remains. Such god-like characters who can create at will, appear again and again in Heinlein's works.

The paradigm of this solipsism (as Alexei Panshin calls it in his critical book, HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION) is, of course, Heinlein's short story, "All You Zombies--" (1959). To a solipsist, the world is essentially unreal - the only real thing is the self: the world exists for and is an extension of the self, not the self of the world. Sitting alone in his room having completed the circle in which he has found himself to be his own mother, father and child - knowing that he is the only person/thing he can be sure of having actual existence, Heinlein's protagonist cries out,

"I know where I come from -- but where did all you zombies come from? I felt a headache coming on, but a headache powder is one thing I do not take. I did it once - and you all went away... You aren't really there at all. There isn't anybody but me - Jane - here alone in the dark. I miss you dreadfully!"<sup>4</sup>

And then there is the character in "By His Bootstraps" (1941), who functions as counselor for successive younger selves in an intricate time paradox story, really a more mechanical and less interesting version of "All You Zombies--." The protagonist in "They" (1941) finds to his horror that his "paranoid delusions" which revolve around his conviction that he is the only human on the planet earth, are true and that his world is actually a carefully designed mock-world with all events and conditions merely "stage props" produced to prevent him from discovering his true importance...

"That is the essence of the plot. all of these creatures have been set up to look like me in order to prevent me from realizing that I was the center of the arrangements. But I have noticed the key fact, the mathematically inescapable fact, that I am unique. Here am I, sitting on the inside. The world extends outward from me. I am the center--"<sup>5</sup>

"I am told that I was born a certain number of years ago and that I will die a similar number of years hence. Various clumsy stories have been offered me to explain to me where I was before birth and what becomes of me after death, but they are rough lies, not intended to deceive, except as misdirection. In every other possible way the world around me assures me that I am mortal, here but a few years, and a few years hence gone completely - nonexistent.

"WRONG - I am immortal. I transcend this little time axis; a seventy-year span on it is but a casual phase in my experience. Second only to the prime datum of my own existence is the emotionally convincing certainty of my own continuity."<sup>6</sup>

Heinlein's genius lies in the creation of fictional worlds and it is primarily through the process of creating/visiting these self-made worlds that Heinlein combats his fears of personal extinction and erects a public myth of power and possible immortality.

As has been noted by Alexei Panshin, the only character(s) developed to any depth or sophistication is the "Heinlein Individual," one character in various (though three major) stages of development: (1) the naive though competent and talented young man, for example Libby of "Misfit" (1939), or Michael Valentine Smith of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND (1961), (2) the competent and cynical middle-aged man who knows-how-things-work; for example, Hamilton Felix of BEYOND THIS HORIZON (1942), Ben Caxton of STRANGER, and (3) the older, less energetic, more cynical man who knows how and why things

work, for example Jubal Harshaw of STRANGER, Dr. Grimes of WALDO (1940), or Lazarus Long of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE (1973). Both Heinlein Individual, stage-2 and stage-3, act frequently as tutors for their younger, more naive selves. Thus, interpreting this three-in-one character as a thin mask for Heinlein himself, one can interpret nearly all of Heinlein's works in the same manner as the short story "All You Zombies--," for the Heinlein individual stands alone in his novels, totally surrounded by non-characters, spearcarriers and undeveloped stereotypes, the clumsy creatures of "They." He interacts only with himself, to create the world around him.

I would suggest then, that the themes of personal liberty and personal survival, which are Heinlein's most obvious and frequently developed themes, are motivated in part by his desire to negate mortality (his own and that of his characters) through the creation of fictional worlds. Self-sufficiency carried to its furthest extreme is Heinlein's answer to death, and self-sufficiency can be achieved only through complete control (i.e., competency, and finally, self-creation).

All of the Heinlein Individuals possess a basic competence which is usually bolstered by an extraordinary ability of some sort. Libby of "Misfit" is a lightning calculator, Max Jones of STARMAN JONES (1953) has a photographic memory and is a crack astrogator, Harriman of THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON (1950) is an entrepreneur extraordinaire, Lawrence (the Great Lorenzo) Smith of DOUBLE STAR is an actor of such skill that he is capable of taking the place (permanently) of the Federation President, and Lazarus Long of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE and the two god-like Michaels of STRANGER and THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS (1966) are all capable of doing just about anything they want ...etc.\* What this means, according to Heinlein's brand of Social Darwinism, is that the Heinlein Individual, by definition, will survive and, in fact, (by circular logic) is morally justified by his very survival. [Might makes right: We will only know if humanity has a "right" to expand throughout the universe, if and when he succeeds. / ...Man is the meanest, roughest, toughest creature in the universe... / and within human society, as articulated in GULF's (1949) secret society, right-thinking individuals with enough strength have the right to choose and destroy other people who deviate from Heinlein's values ... or the right to control political power, as do the right-thinking veterans of STARSHIP TROOPERS...] Thus justified, the Heinlein individual is free to re-make the world in his own image.

Hamilton Felix of BEYOND THIS HORIZON, a man in his prime, who knows-how-things-work, is (again, by definition) the best product of human evolution up to that time. He has in fact, been requested to mate with another such prime (female) specimen in order to produce the next step in human genetic "perfection." Hamilton Felix's dilemma is typical of the Heinlein hero in general: Although in possession of the best faculties and in perfect physical condition, he is looking for an even further proof of his potential, a further proof of his self-sufficiency. He wants scientific proof of an afterlife as "payment" for going on and helping the human race to perpetuate his line. (With this novel and with TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE, Heinlein goes quite a few steps further with the use of the romantic image of one person - a revolutionary or alien-fighter - being instrumental in saving the world. The Heinlein Hero, in effect, creates it!) Felix's sense of "There-has-to-be-something-more-to-life, is presented as his only (suicidal) flaw, the thing that will be eradicated in the next generation of the starline. (His prospective mate seems to be seriously flawed only by her sex.)

Felix's flaw is also the one flaw that Heinlein attempts again and again to eradicate from his character's psyche (as well as from his own) throughout his writing career - especially in later (post-1960) works. After the Heinlein individual grows up a bit and enters his third stage, he becomes aware of the reason things are the way

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\*In connection with the idea of competency, I wonder how much Heinlein's disability (tuberculosis) which ended his active military career, had to do with such stories as "The Green Hills of Earth," (1947) in which the blind Rysling heroically saves a ship and its crew despite his disability, or STARSHIP TROOPERS (1959) in which anyone can serve in the military, disabled or not...

they are. This awareness usually takes the form of a realization that here are a lot of non-Heinlein individuals with different (i.e., wrong) ideas on the way things should work. They are perhaps the silly English professors who demand **escape** from the perfect society into "Coventry" (1940). Or they are the ~~bureaucrats~~, short-sighted plodders of STRANGER who attempt to do away with Michael Smith. Or they are the complacent ones who, unwilling to fight for their liberty/survival/self-sufficiency, will inevitably be enslaved by the PUPPET MASTERS or the PanAsians of SIXTH COLUMN (1941)... In such a world, even given the most perfect advantages of self-sufficiency, what can the Heinlein character do to first, retain his freedom, but most of all to retain his role as world-creator? Hamilton Felix needed to know that his world was bound by more than a perfect (defined) social utopia, that his life could have greater consequence. Hugh Farnham of FARNHAMS FREEHOLD (1964) is tossed from one environment to another, never proving his survival ability but, at last, settling in a place and time in which he is in control and self-sufficient. The place is a cave surrounded by barbed wire and signs proclaiming dire do-not-trespass threats. And in STRANGER, the solution is incorporated into the story by definition: to "grok" (a form of right-thinking that Jubal does without instruction) is to be god and to survive after death through reincarnation.

After this point (about 1960) though, Heinlein has attempted to create his god-characters within their own lifetimes. Jubal Harshaw's sad recapitulation of his life echos through his latest novels:

My dear, I used to think I was serving humanity...and I pleased in the thought. Then I discovered that humanity does not want to be served; on the contrary it resents any attempt to serve it. So now I do what pleases Jubal Harshaw.<sup>7</sup>

What does please Jubal Harshaw (or Joan Eunice Smith or Lazarus Long), however, becomes a problem for Heinlein. In I WILL FEAR NO EVIL (1970), Heinlein sets up what seems to be the most perfect set of possibilities and the best world for which his character hope to exist in. The protagonist (Johann Sebastian Bach) is a stage-3 character who has presumably been through his naive, tutored youth, fought through an action-packed struggle for existence and creation in his middle years, and has at last accumulated an immense amount of wisdom about nearly everything (and he reminds us again and again that he has done nearly everything everybody else has ever thought of, long before they were born). His mind is transplanted into the young (female) body of Eunice Bianca and starts his\* whole life afresh as Joan Eunice Smith, and given his Harriman-like ability to make money, presumably could continue in leapfrog (Lazarus Long) - transplant fashion forever. However, after the rather fascinating prefatory sections in which the legal mechanics of this operation are managed, the protagonist has nothing to do, beyond comment on how he's done it all before, but boy it sure is interesting to see it from the other point of view... (much like Michael and Jill's adventure in STRANGER, when experiencing sex through each other's sensations). There are a number of aborted plot beginnings but nothing ever really happens: there is no central crisis binding the novel together and involving the character(s) in change. At one point, Joan & company pack off onto a ship, Farnham-like, to wait out and escape a nuclear holocaust. The escape fizzles as does the war, perhaps because Heinlein realized that he'd done that story already. The novel ends significantly with a third individual (in stage-2) entering Joan's body, and all three Heinlein individuals (with Eunice, the original youth, stage-1, and Johann, the older, stage-3 individual) all sharing the same body and uniting in time to be reborn in the fetus of their off-spring which has been conceived (à la "All You Zombies--") by #1 and #2, Eunice and Johann.

After reading I WILL FEAR NO EVIL in Galaxy's serialization of it (and for the first time deciding not to purchase a copy in book-form for my library), I felt sure that

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\*Despite the actual sexual metamorphosis of this character, I cannot bring myself to use the female pronoun. (sic sic)



Heinlein could develop his character no further, and that he had reached a dead end. Obviously, with the novel *TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE*, I was a bit premature in this reaction, but I felt it even more strongly after his latest novel. Heinlein has ceased to write good science fiction. His future worlds are suffering from an almost feverish attempt to create a world to fit his character to be god in. They are no longer the brilliant exercises of extrapolation and speculation that his earlier fiction was. Lazarus Long is, again, the stage-3 individual with all the advantages of his younger selves (due to his natural longevity and rejuvenation techniques). He is also - quite literally - the ancestor of nearly everyone in the galactic federation. In consideration of his perfect genes (and the law of survival of the fittest), Lazarus is the most "fit" and is no doubt on the verge of being the ancestor of all surviving humanity.

He has an unusually large heart that beats very slowly. He has only twenty-eight teeth, no caries, and seems to be immune to infection.

He has never had surgery other than for wounds or for rejuvenation procedures. His reflexes are extremely fast - but appear always to be reasoned, so one may question the correctness of the term "reflex".

His eyes have never needed correction either for distance or close work; his hearing range is abnormally high, abnormally low, and is unusually acute throughout his range. His color vision includes indigo. He was born without prepuce, without vermiform appendix...<sup>8</sup>

...and maybe without a navel??

Thus this world is physically as well as philosophically the creation of Heinlein through his character, in a greater (quantitative) sense than even "All You Zombies--". The dilemma of self-sufficiency is solved without resorting to isolation within a barbed-wire fence, but the price is the loss of speculation based upon our society and self-righteous attempts to justify an inflated ego.

Having read Heinlein since I was nine years old, and having gone through the familiar disillusionment with his ideas during my high school days, I find myself nevertheless to be still fascinated by Heinlein's writing and hope that he manages to exorcise his debilitating obsession. Perhaps he will one day write an autobiography to such a purpose, though the possibility seems unlikely given his penchant for personal secrecy. Or perhaps he will discover a proof for his afterlife...

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#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>"Elsewhen," by Robert A. Heinlein, in *ASSIGNMENT IN ETERNITY* (Signet Books: New York, 1953), p. 75. / <sup>2</sup>*IBID.*, p. 74. / <sup>3</sup>*IBID.*, pp. 74-75. / <sup>4</sup>"All You Zombies," by Robert A. Heinlein, in *6xH* (Pyramid Books: New York, 1961) p. 137. / <sup>5</sup>"They," by Robert A. Heinlein, in *6xH* (Pyramid Books: New York, 1961) pp. 141-42. / <sup>6</sup>*IBID.*, p. 146. / <sup>7</sup>*STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND*, by Robert A. Heinlein (New York: Putnam, 1961) / <sup>8</sup>*TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE*, by Robert A. Heinlein (Berkley, New York, 1973) pp. xvi-xvii.

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#### LETTERS DEPARTMENT, CONTINUED (KEVENY'S RESPONSE TO ELLISON) FROM PAGE 10

cautionary tale of the future could be achieved without the setting of the film. The same footage can be seen on the six o'clock news any night. In this sense, he takes pride in and credit for stating the obvious.

If one ignores the setting as typical, and therefore conveying no meaning, one is left to look for the startling effect he proposes in his characterizations. I find the characters to be as simplistic a representation of people as the world Ellison has created is of reality, past, present or future. There is no room for attributing ambiguity to the characters. They do not show human emotion or indeed humanity at all. If people are as unable to reach towards each other through a hostile environment as Vic and Quilla June, the representations of humanity in the film, then what is to be saved by cautioning us about the future of an already doomed race? Who can tolerate such a dim view of humanity as this? Not I.] [J. Gomoll: A cautionary tale does not necessitate redeeming potentials or hopeful hints as to a path to survival...]

Dear Bland Blathers,

So many things are troubling me, I hardly grok where to begin... You see, I had a horrible, deprived childhood, with no mother and no father or anything. I never even saw Sesame Street! I was raised by Martians and never saw another human being until I was well past puberty--So you see I didn't even grok what a woman was, and when I found out, they all looked alike to me and, and, then... Oh, I'm so confused and upset... I just levitated the bed through the window just thinking about last night and now the screaming from outside is making me agitated! Yesterday, Jubal told me that I was incredibly rich too--which, he said, would really give me problems!! I don't grok if I can take any more! What should I do?--Please write before I end it all! Help!

Signed, Michael Valentine Smith

Dear Michael,

Why don't you get involved in some stimulating religious group? That may take care of both your financial and moral dilemmas! (Although perhaps you'd better get a good lawyer in connection with that bed!)

But whatever you do, DON'T start collecting guilt complexes over your actions during this mere mortal travail! Just keep in mind...

IT'S GOD'S WILL!!

BB

Dear Bland Blathers,

I am Lt. Uhura, Communications Officer aboard the USS Enterprise, and for three years and 79 exciting, action-packed episodes I have stood by my Captain, gritting my teeth at my joke of a position--this



\* In interstellar advice-to-the-lovelorn column

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glorified switchboard operator's job, taking some comfort that at least they don't ask me to take notes--well anyway, to get to my problem... Sometimes I think that I am re-living the same situations, the same exciting, action-packed adventures over and over and over again... I have come to the conclusion that this eerie feeling is due to the situation between Captain Kirk and myself. No matter how close the Captain and I become, irregardless of the marvelous comraderie that has developed between us as a result of our close association through adventure after thrilling adventure; I never seem to make any progress (romantically-speaking) with him. When he falls in love, he always conveniently falls in love with someone who dies within an hour or is stationed on the other side of the universe or turns out to be a fake--or something (but always within an hour after contact). So I'm not sure I really want results anyway... But Nurse Chapel and I decided to write you to see what you'd think of our problem, since she has a similar problem with our Science Officer, Mr. Spock...

Signed, Horny, in Space

Dear Horny,

I shouldn't be at all surprised that you think you're repeating yourself! The reason isn't connected with your hopeless crush on the Captain, though. (Forget him--and tell Nurse Chapel to forget Spock too: Spock and Kirk are rooming together.) Your ship is caught in the infamous Sisyphus-Warp, and you are doomed to forever rerun your 79 exciting, action-packed adventures for the benefit of the video-rooted, vegetable population of Trekki.

IT'S GOD'S WILL!!

BB

BLAND BLATHERS WILL BE ACCEPTING LETTERS FROM ANY DENIZEN OF THIS OR ANY OTHER REAL OR FICTIONAL UNIVERSE, DIMENSION, NOVEL, TV SHOW, OR MOVIE. BLAND UNFORTUNATELY CANNOT REPLY ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS, BUT SUGGESTS THAT IF YOU (OR YOUR "FRIEND") HAVE AN ESPECIALLY PERSONAL OR PAINFUL PROBLEM, THAT YOU TALK IT THROUGH WITH GOD, AREA CODE 101-333-3333. BLAND'S CLIENTS WILL BE SENT A SYMPATHY COPY OF THE NEXT JANUS ISSUE IN WHICH THE DETAILS OF THEIR PARTICULAR PERVERSION WILL BE EXPOSED. REST IN PEACE.

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EDITORIAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4:

complicated definition problem on our hands, wouldn't we...

As I suggested in last issue's editorial, sf is definable (---if it must be at all) ONLY in terms of a certain time period, i.e., the 1930's to the present (or perhaps even including the whole technological revolution) of the Western culture. All other attempts to define it, in other words, to separate it from other literature in terms of what it has and mainstream does not have (and vice-versa), proves to be indefensible, as well as harmfully limiting.

Definitions are limiting when they are not readily visualized. I don't think it is necessary to (or possible to) restrict writers or fans of literature in the manner in which they choose to describe themselves. I will continue, in fact, to use the term sf because it is useful. And it will be useful as long as there are writers and works which self-consciously define themselves as such. That self-conscious labeling is not going to continue however, and it is destructive to literature in general to hang on to the term and force works and writers into the roles which now restrain instead of protect.

BOOK  
REVIEWS...



THE COMPUTER CONNECTION, by Alfred Bester (Berkley Medallion, New York, 217 pp.) appeared in ANALOG under the title, THE INDIAN GIVER in a slightly different form Nov., 1974 through Jan., 1975. A review by Douglas H. Price.

Alfred Bester's first science fiction novel in nineteen years is a treasure. It probably won't win any awards, but it is certainly worth reading. The central character, Edward Curzon, is immortal. That in itself is not unusual in science fiction, but the way he was endowed with nearly eternal life is bizarre to say the least. He was in residence on Krakatoa when it exploded in 1883. This cleansed his cells of lethal buildups present in normal cells. He is the youngest member of the Group, a loose association of immortals including Jesus Christ, the living incarnation of Siva, a Neanderthal named Hic-Haec-Hoc, and many others.

Ever since his rebirth, Curzon has attempted to "recruit" new members for the Group by killing them as horribly as possible. This odd hobby earns him the nick-name Grand Guignol, or just Guig.

But even these fascinating individuals are paled before the delightfully zany universe that Bester has created. Dozens of science fiction clichés have been worked into the background. Everything from a rampaging, world controlling computer to campus riots with missiles and lasers, appears at one point or another. But don't get me wrong, this is not a humorous work. Several subplots are skillfully woven together to make it a logical whole. A suspended animation experiment ends paradoxically when the three human test subjects disappear. Curzon targets Dr. Guess, the scientist in charge, for his new recipe of violent death. The Extro, the master computer complex inexplicably tries to kill every immortal it can find. Dr. Guess becomes a tool of the Extro, the three experimental test subjects reappear, altered.

While this book may not contain many Great Truths or otherwise have Overwhelming Literary Merit, it is still pleasant reading. I recommend this to anyone tired of being preached at for various and assorted reasons. This book has no Message. It is simply entertaining. Great books usually have Messages, good books don't need them.

A REVIEW OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S LATER WORKS (A COMMENTARY BY THOMAS J. MURN)

The short story, "The Blah blah blah," appearing in the January, 197X issue of XX, was a good example of ---

Say wait a minute hold it I mean this is 1976 isn't it? And when you were awake in 68 then 76 looked, well, lite-years away - and it was going to be vastly different,



wasn't it? - Well it is you see: the creepy, surreal monsters are here, and they are the New Order. You know, GRAVITY'S RAINBOW, EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS WRONG, 334, DHALGREN. These dramas are more than entertainment or lyrical symbolism. They have captured a spirit which exists and will exist in a Seventies and Eighties Western Society; which face it, the greyhairs rooted in the Forties ARE NOT ABLE TO DO. Now let's make that distinction when we talk about sf as literature, as art; cuz art, literature do have to be vital, moving somewhere for what it's worth. These other Grand Old Boys (and

Girls) in sfdom are in the realm of Entertainment, American publishing style. Cigar-chomping space burghers and maidens menaced by ray guns; these things in their many forms are not what we may expect of the present, or of the future. Even people such as Silverberg and Brunner have done their thing and pointed in some direction (for what it was worth) - and NOW we look beyond, as any good calendar company does.

Did you really want to hear about Arthur C. Clarke's later works? Did you really want to hear about the future? Or about the Past.

AFTERWORD, OR FORWARD, TO "A REVIEW OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S LATER WORKS" (MORE COMMENTARY BY THOMAS J. MURN)

In a world where there was William Burroughs fifteen years ago, where sheer technocratic size imperatives have been making many traditions obsolete;

And if sf is the literature of change, as some of us would like to believe;

Then there might not be time to dawdle with the heritage of Bellamy, or Asimov or Gernsback or even the dinosaur presence of a Roger Elwood. Niven, Clarke, you know in your heart that these people are reflections of a time that is most certainly gone by. This is 1976, hey, and aren't things moving by kinda fast?

The times will soon be such that not making a choice about the direction of our world's social evolution will mean having chosen already. And in sf, it will be more difficult to choose, because often it may mean the choice between the Brave Old World and the guarded treasure interests of a favorite flame, the attachment to a particular story-teller (or set of storytellers) that oftentimes make fandom resemble a large group of symbolic stamp collectors, bibliophiles rather than makers of the reality which then must be ordered.

Well, so be it. -My own storytelling favorite, Zelazny, can be given the axe right here in front of you, and I hope a point will emerge from his axed remains.

Yes, Zelazny, that creator of mutate sorcery sagas, and I do love his books as masterful tales, and attractive in the telling, BUT this is, again, 1976 and - the nature of our world and the possibilities open to us will not include a Corwin. Corwin wouldn't be able to get the point across, there in suspended Amber.

No, here we are on 1976 Earth, badly needing an applicable 'literature of change,' and I guess that if the scripts don't go that way, then they become distractions. And aren't there quite enough distractions in the Seventies West already?

CRASH by J. G. Ballard. (Pinnacle Books, 224 pp.)

A review by Thomas J. Murn.

HEY YOU THERE, yes you techno-child of the Seventies, well-informed literate sensitive soul. Do you picture yourself as a feeling, sensitive being? You who actually felt nauseous on the back streets of Paris in Sarte's NAUSEA, who felt frustrated with reality after shooting the Arab, walking the beach in THE STRANGER---

Yes, all you sensitive society-observers out there will simply FLIP over JG Ballard's new speculative saga, CRASH. CRASH is guaranteed to thoroughly sicken you with its extended study of sex, violence, and freeway overpasses - all the main components of our distracting contemporary lives. CRASH is modern Western society at its absolutely most degraded, misguided, and mentally ill. Nary a tender scene or placid setting will disturb your journey through Ballard's condemned mental-physical inner city.

Now CRASH can't really be classified as science fiction; the setting is contemporary London and environs, the characters are photographers, advertising agents, doctors. The real phantasy parts are in the minds of the two deranged central characters. The world in which they exist is described with a singular style - devoid of any real life, people lacking direction and purpose, landscapes which change but do not change. There is a typically morbid scene in which the narrator, standing along an expressway shoulder, visualizes wounds of shattered safety glass from automobile crashes growing higher along the right-of-way with the passing of years, a rolling esker following the path of the road. . . .

But the real shock comes when you realize how similar the scenes of auto-carnage and dehumanized sex are to exactly how life proceeds in the western world today. A big faceless and meaningless trap it is. I can't help but recall the dusty Prussian courtroom of THE TRIAL. Seventies Technocracized America has added sex as an extra diversion; but the nothingness of spirit is far too similar.

What is the real tragedy is that warning signs such as CRASH are bound to be ignored by the human hives. THE TRIAL didn't seem to make much difference, and neither did MAIN STREET or BABBITT. Well, at least we'll leave behind a nice little literary catalogue of our spiritual, moral, and ethical abuses, after we all go the way of our cars, smashed to splinters, endless junkyard dwellers.

THE EXILE WAITING by Vonda McIntyre

THE DISPOSSESSED by Ursula LeGuin (Avon, 1974, 311 pp.)

An analysis by Jeanne Gomoll

Mischa is the name of the main character in Vonda McIntyre's first novel, THE EXILE WAITING, though I am tempted to call her by another name - Alice in Wonderland. She, like the protagonist in Ursula LeGuin's latest novel, THE DISPOSSESSED, is an individual out of place: one rational person trapped among a confused population; one crazy person loose within a sane community... Whichever you decide upon reading these novels, both characters can be seen to be striving for escape from the physical and spiritual nets of their homelands, in order to find the space to grow and in order to search for the new ideas and systems that can prime that growth. And both characters leave, finally, in order to return. This is an explicit theme in Ursula LeGuin's novel involving a temporal theory and imagery that loops the novel together.. Shevek, of THE DISPOSSESSED, leaves the moon (Anarres, his homeworld), in order to experience another, and returns to his home at the end. He and the rest of the Anarres denizens are "dispossessed" to the extent that they have shut themselves off from the new, not - as is the first impression - because they have formed a society without the concepts of ownership and have restricted themselves to the inhospitable moon of their original planet, Urras. Mischa, of McIntyre's EXILE, finds herself in a similar state of dispossession, or exile, being shut out from "rights of passage" to other worlds. In order to grow (even to "grow up"), they must leave the place of their birth, so that



when they return they will better know themselves and their homelands. Mischa also escapes her world (the underground society of an environmentally destroyed earth), but only manages this at the end of the book: her eventual return is foreshadowed by the homecoming of another "escapee" which is lyrically described within the opening chapters of EXILE.

Another important similarity between these two novels and admittedly the reason which compelled me to begin thinking about writing this comparative article, is that both novels are truly excellent examples of feminist sf writing. McIntyre's novel is noteworthy primarily for her remarkable presentation of a competent, powerful and complex female protagonist. Ursula LeGuin's novel, though seen through the eyes of a male protagonist, beautifully describes a society in which one cannot help but notice the conspicuous lack of sexism. Thus her main character, Shevek, stands out as a person first (before "man"), because he has not been socialized to identify himself in a primarily sexual manner.

McIntyre's EXILE is the story of a young woman (Mischa) wandering and surviving by her wits in a confusing and dangerous world. The physical description of her community (literally a honey-combed warren of stone caves, twisting passages and hiding holes, - "a morass of irregularities and inconsistencies"), becomes both a marvelous image of the mad, convoluted organization of the "Center" and a symbol for the mental maze she must find her way through in order to escape her past, i.e., ties to her family and community prejudices. Her world is populated by an enormous number of mutants, most of whom are exiled to the nether-regions of the underground cavern system below the Center (and with whom Mischa knows her psychic abilities may one day cause her to be cast). Mischa's identification with these weird outcasts and misfits, the profusion of nightmarish traps and stumbling blocks impeding her escape - together with McIntyre's description of the Center's geography - conspire together to remind one of Alice's wanderings in Lewis Carroll's story.

Mischa is an adept street criminal whose talent stems from an ability to see patterns, to conceive of systems, to CONNECT - (in direct contrast to the seeming processes of her environment). She is, apparently, able to "visualize in four dimensions." Her ability to grasp the essentials of "How-Things-Work" is almost on the order of the Heinlein Hero, for - like Libby of "Misfit" - she is discovered to be a mathematical genius and through her extraordinary abilities, finally makes good her escape from exile on earth. Furthermore, she possesses uncanny physical and psychic resources that increase her survival capability. She can communicate telepathically with those close to her, and during a light failure ---

People began to scream. Mischa had realized several years before she could see better in the dark than most people could see at all, but she had not realized that the ability protected her from a primal fear.

Where Mischa bears some resemblance to the Heinlein Hero (in that she acquires power through knowing how-things work), McIntyre's characters differ crucially from Heinleins in that both sexes are drawn with strong definition and marvelous depth. Among these characters are Mischa's sister and brother, her tutor, Jan, as well as the pseudo-sibs who provide the stimulus for Mischa's escape, as well as dramatically demonstrating the necessity of coming to terms with and not being dominated by one's origins.

Ursula LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED is also a story of an individual's need to resist an imposed exile/dispossession by revolting against the restrictions holding him to his homeworld. Shevek breaks with custom and community-approval by leaving the isolation of Anarres where his ancestors had long ago set up a society based upon the principles of their revolution on the mother planet. Urras, as these principles consisted primarily in a denial of private property and entailed a basic social revolution, not the



least outcome of which was the removal of a sexual hierarchy. The Utopia is a working Utopia whose only apparent flaw seems to be that its members are in danger of instituting a kind of intellectual hierarchy based upon the ownership of ideas rather than of the familiar physical (or human) properties. It is from this pressure (since Shevek is "in possession" of a particularly good idea, one that will unify physics with mysticism and form the basis of a temporal theory which will allow instantaneous communication and travel) that Shevek flees in order to become shed of his unwilling possession.

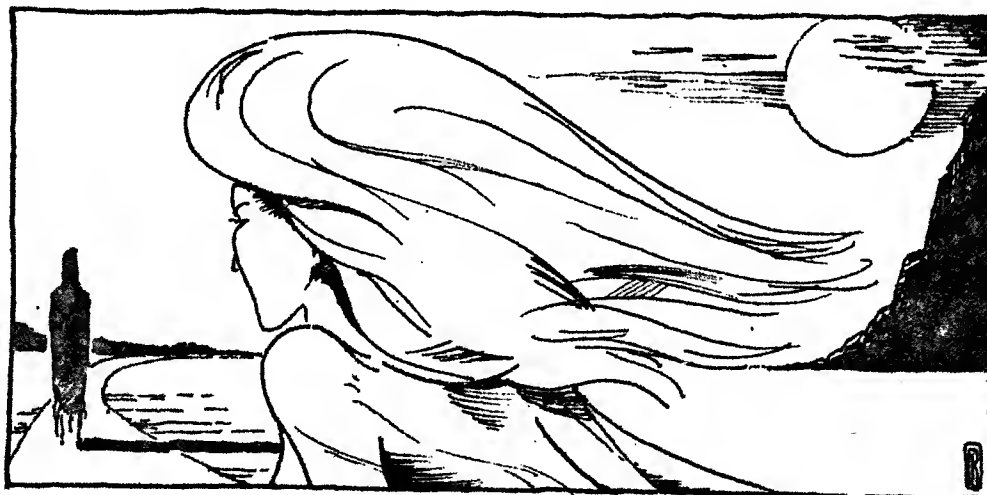
LeGuin's novel is set up on a far more imaginative order than Bellamy's Looking Backward, but still functions by presenting a visitor from a Utopian society who comments upon the inadequacies of a world which bears obvious similarities to our own.

The chapters alternate in describing in turn the situation which prompts Shevek to leave Anarres and the situation Shevek confronts on Urras. The Anarres Utopia is flawed as has been suggested, but it is still one of the most idealistic of Utopian images to be presented in sf for some time now. In agreement with the American and British authors who wrote Utopian novels in the early 1900's, LeGuin describes and prescribes her new society upon the basis of economic rearrangement. And in further agreement - this time with a good deal of modern feminist theory - she demonstrates that with the absence of concepts of private possession, a society abandons also the concepts of human "ownership" and the subservience of whole groups of people (or of an entire sex).

Her conceptualization of the societies (both Anarres and the earth-analogue, Urras) are convincing and entertaining. As was the case in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, LeGuin demonstrates her forte in creating outstanding and captivating fictional world-settings. LeGuin's use of Anarres society as the background to her story is especially exciting in that (as did Vonda McIntyre's novel) the potentials for a non-sexist society are considered as is unfortunately so seldom the case in sf.

Both THE DISPOSSESSED and THE EXILE WAITING are excellent novels. Besides the elements of characterization and their depictions of potential non-sexist future societies already discussed, both novels are rousing good stories enhanced with provocative styles that should cause them to endure as popular and important novels for some time to come. The image of McIntyre's crystalline caves far beneath the Center complex which have been formed and made deadly by discarded industrial wastes, is ironically reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s singing crystals of Mercury. And Ursula LeGuin's spectacular and poignant vision of a dry, near-sterile world being intensively worked in order to provide sustenance for its small population, is on the order of Herbert's DUNE ecology, and, of course, her own novel, THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS in which she utilized a cold ecology for her setting.

They are both brilliant novels; I heartily recommend them.



Vonda N. McIntyre, "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand", in Women of Wonder ( Pamela Sargent, ed.), Vintage Books, 1.95; 1974

The Exile Waiting, Fawcett Publications, 1.25; 1975

(Article by Jan Bogstad)

The most remarkable features of Vonda McIntyre's The Exile Waiting are also apparent in her short story "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" which won the 1973 Nebula Award for best novelette. These are her dynamic characterizations of female figures and her portrayals of interpersonal relationships.

The heroes of both novel and novelette are active, self-sufficient women who manage to survive quite well in the hostile environments Ms. McIntyre creates. Because "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" is a short story, the main character, Snake, is presented as a fully developed woman, master of the situation in which she finds herself as the sole "snake doctor" in a large area of wilderness. Her dialogue exhibits her knowledge of her craft and of the people around her who see her alternately as demon and savior. Mischa, the protagonist of The Exile Waiting, is a skillful and determined thief, the only occupation which allows her to keep her self respect in the underground city in which the novel takes place. At the outset she is self-sufficient, but not necessarily using her full potential. There is room for her character and her personal situation to develop into something more positive. It is this generally positive view of the humanness of her characters which attracts me to Ms. McIntyre's works, especially because of its close correspondence to reality.

One way in which this positive characterization is portrayed is in the description of relationships between men and women. There is never the sense that the female characters need the protection, help or guidance of men anymore than men look for it in women. Each seeks out the other for strengths and positive qualities they see there. More often than not, characters respond positively to the need they see in one another. Thus, a young tribesman, Arevin, while initially suspicious of Snake in "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" comes to admire and perhaps even to love her as they talk to each other of their experiences. The most striking example of one kind of strength responding to another in The Exile Waiting, is the respect and personal, rather than sexual, desire that the Raider Subtwo has for the competent but reserved female steward of the royal domain where he first makes contact with Mischa's world. He, a super-logical, mathematical genius, unable to tolerate disorder, but equally unable to cope with his own emotions, thinks only in terms of this admiration of Madame's efficiency and of his hope that she will come to accept him rather than forcing himself on her. The feelings that the male character, Jan, has for an old female starship navigator are equally edifying. Each recognized in the other that which they needed to assuage a temporary weakening under the general pain of existence.

The Exile Waiting contains other examples of humanitarian characterization. The protagonist, Mischa, very well accomplished at keeping herself alive, is shown in her dependence on the freely given help of others in her world. Her brother Chris is responsible for her freedom, a friend, Kiri, for teaching her livelihood, Jan Hiraku and the twin Subtwo for giving her the opportunity she needs to get out of the dismal subterranean world of The Exile Waiting. This dependence of a character on others is such a refreshing change from the omniscient, super-strong, wise and therefore very unrealistic characters one often finds in sf novels.

The final aspect of Ms. McIntyre's characterizations which I admire is the terms in which she portrays those characters who do evil. Those who cause suffering, pain, sorrow, seem to do so out of ignorance, fear, or sometimes arrogance. The tribespeople who she is trying to help, kill one of Snake's beloved pets ( a small, harmless snake called Grass). This angers her but she also recognizes that they have done it out of ignorance and fear of its powers. Still she continues to treat the boy she was curing before in "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand."

Even the evil, elitist ruling class houses, represented by the characters Clarissa and Blaisse, are seen in their ignorance. Blaisse makes it clear from his conversations with Subtwo, that he does not consider his 'companions' or 'playmates' to have the same level of humanity as himself. This is why he finds it so simple to mistreat them. Not only is his ignorance clear, but Subtwo notes the fact in the narrative. Another character, Val, who was thrust out of the domains of the aristocracy for her mutant appearance (red hair which appeared all over her body at puberty), recognizes this limited view of humanity because she has been on both sides of it. Subone, one of the two 'villians' of The Exile Waiting, also acts on a fear that his twin can reject him for other people and jealousy of his twin's other acquaintances.

This skillful portrayal of the motives behind people's evil acts is what I consider to be the most realistic aspect of Ms. McIntyre's characterizations. Very few people are innately evil. They act so toward their fellows because of those very reasons she discusses, or out of economic pressure. This is not an excuse for the evil that they perpetrate, in reality or in Ms. McIntyre's books. For example, the stratified society of The Exile Waiting collapses in the revolution that the actions of Mischa, Jan, and Val set in motion. Ms. McIntyre's characterizations therefore offer a positive view of the nature of humanity, showing in her characters, the possibility for a better future. If people act evilly out of ignorance and misdirected emotions, they may be made to cease acting so through education.

"Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" presents a fairly complete and believable setting for Snake's story. There are, however, definite gaps in the depiction of Mischa's environment. Several details important to the plot structure of The Exile Waiting are incompletely or inadequately explained. This is made all the more distracting because they are mentioned frequently, as if the reader should either know all about them or just accept them without further explanation. One is distracted in wondering who the 'raiders' are and why they exist. The exact nature of the oft mentioned 'Rim worlds' is also left a puzzle. Some aspects of the setting are painted in great detail such as the caverns under Mischa's city. On the whole, however, the setting is a mere shadow-framework in which the characters move.

Irrespective of the technical problems of world-building mentioned above, the novel and novelette by Ms. McIntyre were the best sf works I have read in many months.

Piers Anthony, CHTHON, Berkley Medallion Book, Nov. 1975, \$1.25 (Jan Bogstad, reviewer)

A weird combination of psychological and scenic postulations makes up the body of Piers Anthony's work. There are several speculations offered in the text concerning the nature of and reasons behind the existence of garnet mines deep within the bowels of an unspecified planet. Criminals are sent there if they are considered unable to adjust to the rules of any society. Here they are rendered the least dangerous in an environment of contained anarchy. All that is required of them is that they produce a certain number and kind of garnets for their captors to sell on the luxury market. They are allowed to live through a system of exchange: No garnets = no food. This is one explanation for the existence of the mines where the protagonist finds himself at the outset of the novel. His crime is his love for a 'forbidden' woman which is portrayed as being completely out of his control. Since so much of the action of CHTHON is not action but Aton's imagination of himself acting, it is difficult to decide what really happens in the novel. What is the character Aton supposed to have done and how does he act in response to what has been done to him? This problem is slightly confused by the non-linear progression of the narrative. Aton's story is told with flashback and forward chapters and with several characters analyzing his and their actions. His love for the forbidden harpie woman is supposed to be the cause of his mental disorientation. Her racial characteristics (for reasons you must read the book to discover) make it impossible for him to either love her wholeheartedly or love anyone else either. A most frustrating book is Piers Anthony's CHTHON, not only because the plot is unclear but because it is sometimes unclear if there is a plot. The book's main purpose seems to be the depiction of weird psychological and emotional states, a weirdly constructed universe with weird scenery and peopled by weird creatures. CHTHON is an Idyl not a story; a picture before a plot. It is more intent on creating a set of moods than a conclusion about the past, present, or future.

